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MARRIED BENEATH HIM.

VOL. III.



MARRIED BENEATH HIM.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"LOST SIR MASSINGBERD."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

London and Cambridge:

MACMILLAN AND CO.

1865.

250. u. 19.

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LONDON :
R. CLAY, SON, AND TAYLOR, PRINTERS,
BREAD STREET HILL.



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MARRIED BENEATH HIM.

CHAPTER I.

NOT A HAPPY FAMILY.

SOME time has elapsed since the period of the last chapter, which, however, can scarcely be reckoned by years. But what does it matter? Human life is like an Alpenstock, the length of which is as nothing to its proprietor, compared with its notches, each the record of some remarkable event. For who but one who has vegetated rather than lived, cares for the date upon which this and that may have occurred to him? "It was in '34—no, let me see; yes, it must have been in '34, or was it in '35?" &c. Who cares? Man grows old, ay, and young, too, in a day; and the London

street-child, who dies so early, lives a longer life—with all respect to the calendar—than the gray-haired sire of the village. Since the actors in life's drama, rapt in the event, are themselves so careless of the epoch, how strange it seems that we, the spectators, should be so solicitous about the matter! If I err in time, however, by a month or two, let me at least be particular about the place.

Scene, a little house, frightfully dear, abutting on Park Lane; *hour*, early morning, or, in other words, 10.30; *dramatis persona*, a girl with all about her that youth, and beauty, and wealth can give, and yet who is evidently not happy. It is not the pale cast of thought alone (although hers is a very thoughtful face) which, reversing Pygmalion's miracle, makes alabaster of that noble brow. If her figure were not so admirably proportioned, showing no trace of the ravage of sickness, one would say she had been suffering for years from physical pain. Her features have that concentrated calm about them, which is not resignation, although it shows the determination to bear. Her morning attire

is faultless ; but the knowledge of that fact should not have prevented one so fair and young from glancing at the mirror, before seating herself at the breakfast-table alone. She does not glance therein, however, although there are many mirrors. The one above the lace-hung mantelpiece reflects four others, so that it is difficult to tell what is space and what is only mirage in that splendid room ; moreover, at the west end of the room, over the fireplace, there is quite an optical delusion in a framed and gilded piece of plate-glass, yet no mirror, which looks out into a flower-filled conservatory, and so through open windows (for it is summer-time) into the Park. It is altogether as fair an indoor scene as Wealth has ever bidden his servants, Fancy and Good Taste, to conjure up. One would have thought it almost happiness to sink upon the yielding damask of that gilded chair, and take in such light and colour with half-shut eyes—to let the scented coolness of the place breathe over one until the senses slid to Fairy-land. But she who yonder sits, with her sweet chin sunk in her white hand, takes nothing of these seeming

beauties in : if that rare boudoir had suffered sudden change, and noiselessly become a dining-room in Baker Street, she would scarcely have noticed the transformation. If, for the pink egg-shell china of the breakfast service, had been substituted delf, it would have been all the same to her. When the children of earth are sick at heart, no toys can gladden them, bought at whatever price.

There were letters lying at her dimpled elbow, and she had given them one indifferent glance as she came in ; but there they lay unopened, perfumed, delicate. Dainties of all kinds wooed her palate ; hot meats which preserved their heat in silver dishes, fed by crocus flames ; fruits decked with flowers ; conserves as fair to sight as taste ; but she touched none of them. She looked out on some vanished Past with tearless eyes, and fed on *that*. Presently, a heavy step sounded even on the well-carpeted stairs without ; a gruff voice, muttering some ribald tune, made itself heard through the close-shutting quilted doors. Then the fair face grew sterner, colder ; but the eyes were no longer

vacant; they saw (it was plain) the man that was coming even before he came. No wonder they gave forth no smile of welcome. Youth was the sole outward advantage that the new-comer possessed, and even *its* fair impress was defaced and blurred. His eyes were red, his cheeks were bloated, his voice had the roughness which results from continual indulgence in strong drinks.

"Why, in the name of all the devils, is there no iced soda-water?" cried he, looking round him savagely.

The woman did not speak, but motioned towards a silver table-bell. He shook it passionately, as a dog shakes some object it does not understand.

"That is not the way," cried she quietly: "touch the spring; so."

"Curse the spring!" returned the young man. "You are always so precious clever, you are. Why can't you have bells like other people? I hate this room, I tell you. I can never tell whether I am standing in it upon my head or my heels. Damme, it's always full of people."

A glance of ineffable scorn passed over her face.

"What! I'm always drunk, am I? and that's why. You are much to be pitied, *you* are! Ah, yes, you needn't speak; I know what you're thinking; you are thrown away upon me, eh? Beautiful tender flower, only fit to be in a hot-house, this rough weather of mine don't suit you. However, as it is, you are my wife." He spoke the last words slowly, dwelling upon them with malignant pleasure, like some unjust judge passing sentence upon his private foe.

"Sir, you need not remind me," returned the girl, unable to restrain a shiver such as comes over one at recollection of some loathsome touch of crawling insect or of trailing reptile; "you are my lawful lord."

"But not your *love*, you minx," returned the other swiftly; "you dare to tell me that?"

The faithful mirrors flashed the news about that here he shook his fist in her white face "Do you know why I do not strike you, madam?" he muttered between his teeth.

"No," said she, with calm contempt; "as I live, I cannot tell."

"Because it would spoil your face—my fine French lady's face, for which I have paid so much. I would not break this egg-cup, for the same reason."

He took the thing he spoke of in his hand—a tree of rarest china, with a boy climbing up it in search of eggs, and placing his hand within a bird's nest, which was the cup itself.

"By Heaven! what have I not paid? Why, you jade, I might have bought two as fair as you for half the money; and yet, I'll wager you are not grateful. Your father, too"——

"John Meyrick!" cried the girl, rising sudden as a ghost, and confronting her husband face to face—so near, that her breath stirred his brown hair while she was speaking—"ill-use *me* as you will; call me bad names; curse, strike me—and if you strike me dead, I'll thank you for it. But spare my father. Even you, I think, have a fondness for your mother. Well, he

is father, and mother, and all to me, and I have no other friend in the whole world!"

He stepped back a pace or two, admiringly, like one who regards a picture lately purchased, and although by no means at a bargain, yet which is worth all the money. "Now, I like you so," said he; "I mean your face. When you have got your airs on, it doesn't suit me; but, just as now, submissive and asking favours (which I don't mean to grant), then it really pleases me. This spendthrift father of yours—there, it's not worth a shilling now—is, I was about to observe, as rapacious as any pike. Although he has persuaded the governor to come down uncommon handsome, yet I protest I have no money to spend; all goes in gim-cracks, like these, of his own choosing. It is a very fine thing to have taste—but to gratify it at other people's expense, that is the act of a—— What do you call him in your country, madam? We call him here a swindler. Why do I let him furnish my house, invite his own friends, give entertainments at my

expense? Ain't I the most good-natured man in the world? Why, I say"—

There was a noise at the handle of the door. It did not open softly and quickly as usual. Before it did so, the girl was seated quietly at the breakfast-table, pouring out tea, and her husband had snatched up the newspaper.

"My dear Eugenie," exclaimed the new-comer gaily, "you must forgive this wicked old father, who is late again. It is said that all aged persons are prone to rise early, in order to get as much out of life as possible; but if so, *ma foi*, I must still be young! As for you two, you are mere children—babies. What a charming English picture is here! The wife employed in her domestic duties; the husband reading—what do you call it—the City article?"

"And cursedly stupid, too," responded the young man, gruffly.

"Of course, it is stupid, my dear John—how well you look, by-the-bye; I suppose your hair curls naturally, like my wig—but then it is so excessively

rich. You cannot expect everything. I feel getting stupid myself, living in such exceedingly fine clover here ; thanks to you, my young friend."

"It costs a pretty penny, sir," observed the other coarsely.

"Ah, I like that expression—a pretty penny ! The endeavour to lighten the prosaic dulness that clings to all current coin by such a form of words, is really estimable. Yes, your father writes that he thinks we have been a little extravagant ; but very wisely adds : 'I have every confidence, however, that the money has been well spent.' He is pleased to think that his son is in the best society that London has to offer ; that nothing vulgar, not to say low or contaminating, is mixed up with his life. My dearest John, is it possible that you are taking brandy in your tea ?"

"Well, a fellow must have something, sir. I feel a cup too low this mórning. The fact is, we kept it up till rather late last night—I and some—some university men."

"As I saw them from my window, they did not look like university men," returned M. de Lernay, quietly; "but perhaps that was because they were disguised in liquor. Seriously, John, I don't think your father would be pleased if he knew that this sort of thing was going on. He relies upon Eugenie and me to make you a good boy. We have taken you in hand, we two benevolent missionaries; we are civilizing, I do not say the noble savage, because that would be rude, but one whose education has been somewhat neglected and certainly cut short. You know what your father said when you had to leave college in that sudden manner?"

"Yes, I know," muttered the young man. "What is it you want now?"

"Nothing, nothing," returned the count with sprightliness, helping himself to caviare; "only let us be dutiful, and cultivate good society. I was thinking, last night, how admirably the drawing-rooms in this pleasant house of yours are adapted for charades."

"What's that?" inquired Mr. John Meyrick, sulkily.

"He doesn't know what charades are!" exclaimed the count, regarding his son-in-law with the horror of a conscientious magistrate, before whom is brought a witness who does not understand the nature of an oath.

"Have what you like, then!" roared the young man, savagely. "Whatever it is, it can't be worse than the other tomfooleries. I hate 'em all, for my part."

"Then you wouldn't like to take any other rôle, I conclude, my dear John; otherwise we should be glad of your services. I don't know anybody who would shine better in an unconcerted piece, like *Valentine and Orson*, for instance."

"Don't make a fool of me," growled Mr. John Meyrick. "I don't believe you."

He scowled under his knitted brows at Eugenie, as though he would say: "*You* shall pay for this, madam."

"Or shall we have something out of your Shakespeare?" pursued the old man, musing. "*You*, of course, like all Englishmen, adore him. What say you to that scene from the *Merchant of Venice*? Come,

you know something of the Jews, John ; do you not think I should make an excellent Shylock ? ”

No man ever looked or spoke less like a Jew than M. de Lernay, yet he believed what he said. He had an overweening confidence in the versatility of his own genius ; and he had his countrymen's hunger for praise.

“ Come,” reiterated he, “ should I not make a good Jew ? ”

“ Ay,” returned the young man, with a sneer, “ you would do that.”

“ Then there is Portia,” resumed the Frenchman, airily. “ Will my beloved Eugenie play that part, making a lawyer's wig and gown the most becoming of all possible garments ? ”

“ I shall have acting enough to do, papa, without that,” replied his daughter, wearily.

“ That is true, love. You will play the hostess, always a weighty task ; and yet you wear it like a lily. I think Mrs. Meredith shall be Portia. Yes ; she has unexceptionable ankles, and her hair is not too massy for the wig.”

"That will never do, papa."

"Yes, it will do," cried Mr. John Meyrick, with some enthusiasm. "If that's charades, then I like them."

"We are in the hands of the lady of the house," observed M. de Lernay, calmly. "When she says 'No,' that is sufficient for all gentlemen. I tell you—if there is a difficulty about getting a lady actor—who would make up a capital Portia—Frederick Galton."

Mr. John Meyrick leaped from his chair, with an execration, and slapped the table with his open hand, so that the egg-shell china danced and danced again.

"You seem very pleased," observed M. de Lernay, quietly. "But you frighten your wife, sir, by being so vehement. See, she has turned quite pale. Sit down, I say."

When a person of usually polite manners utters words such as the last four, in the tone in which a sportsman exclaims: "Down charge!" to his refrac-

tory pointer, they mean something more than they express. In the present case, they meant: "You vile young cub! Do you dare to put yourself in a passion with me, who have got the whip-hand of you in every way; who can tell worse things of you than are already known, and upon whose report of your behaviour hangs much of your future fortune, and all your prospects of ready money?"

Mr. John Meyrick sat down accordingly, muttering to himself a string of terrible expletives, but with the subdued air of a repentant sinner telling his beads.

"Yes, we will have Galton," pursued the Frenchman, reflectively. "The Ackerses are out of town, so he can come without the chance of anything unpleasant; although why they should have cut him, I can't imagine."

"Married their maid-servant," grunted Mr. John Meyrick.

"Well, and what then? There was a rival the less for Sir Geoffrey and for all other marrying young men.

You sneer; that is because you are a fool, my dear young friend. Mr. Frederick Galton, without rank, without fortune, without birth, was only, as your Wilkes has said, half an hour or so behind the very best of them. He has grace, beauty, and wit; and, ah, he has youth, youth, youth!"

The old man dropped his voice; and playing softly upon the table with his fingers, hummed the first verse of a love-song.

"They say he beats his wife," observed the young man maliciously.

"They say what is not true, then," exclaimed Eugenie, helping herself to coffee, with an unsteady hand.

"And how the devil should you know that it is not true?" retorted her husband furiously.

"Because Frederick Galton is a gentleman," observed M. de Lernay sternly; and gentlemen neither beat their wives nor swear at them."

"You should hear Potts talk about it, then—that literary fellow," continued John Meyrick, doggedly.

"Ay, Potts shall be the Duke," mused the French-

man; "he is pompous enough for anything; and his friend, Jonathan Johnson, shall be Antonio."

"Ay, Jonathan Johnson, too, was telling the other day how Galton was going to the dogs," continued Meyrick.

"A poor marriage always turns out unfortunately," remarked M. de Lernay, with a half-glance at his daughter.

Eugenie smiled wearily, then sighed.

"But Johnson says that even the girl has not bettered herself by becoming Mrs. Frederick. None of her own sex will visit her, of course. She's as poor as ever she was, and worse, because they're over head and ears in debt. And yet they live at Somers Town. Why, Potts told us, you remember, sir, that they had scarcely enough to eat at home, although Galton himself is still pretty welcome everywhere. I should think Mary Perling—"

M. de Lernay was taken with so violent a fit of sneezing, that the end of the sentence was inaudible.

"I never knew any mixture do that before," remarked the Frenchman, tapping his snuff-box—"Will

my darling Eugenie walk with her father in the Park this morning, before the heat comes on?"

"One moment, papa," said the young girl, quietly. "My husband was making an observation which he did not complete. You were saying, sir?"

"I don't know what I was saying," returned Mr. John Meyrick, yawning. "Whatever it was, I didn't say it to you, Madam Curiosity. I shall go in here, and have a cigar."

With these words, the young man rose, and entered the conservatory, where he could still be seen through the window-mirror, lolling among the flowers, and smoking.

"Papa," said Eugenie, looking at her father fixedly, and speaking in a low, earnest tone, "is it true, what that man said?"

"I am sure I don't know, my love," returned the other, carelessly; "it is perhaps as true as most gossip. I dare say the young fellow is tired of his vulgar toy by this time. They are also in debt, I believe. I have been in debt, myself, yet here I am, you see." He

looked around him upon the world of damask and gilding, and lace and crystal, with a triumphant air.

"The name, the name?" repeated she, impatiently.
"Did I hear that name aright?"

"Yes," returned the old man, harshly. "I thought you knew."

"You thought I knew that Mary Perling was starving—his own sister, the sister for whose sake *he* saved ours, and I *here*!"

"My dear child, people say 'starving' in this country when they speak of anybody who has less than five hundred a year, and lives at Somers Town."

"She is as poor as ever she was, and worse, because they are over head and ears in debt," repeated Eugenie;
"they have scarcely enough to eat at home"—that is what he said."

"They want money, of course, my dear; everybody does, so far as I know."

"Mary Perling wants it, and we have it, papa—is that not so? This has been kept from me very cruelly."

The ordinarily unruffled brow of M. de Lernay grew black with wrinkles.

"You have no right to spend your husband's money, Eugenie, in such a fashion."

"What! papa!" Her dark eyes glittered, but not with tears, her pale cheeks burned with shame, but not for herself. He rose, and stepping to the nearest looking-glass, attired his painted face in smiles again.

"My love, that is my own opinion, certainly," returned he gaily; "but I know so little of money matters, it is quite possible that I may be wrong."

"You *are* wrong, Monsieur de Lernay. Look you," said she, "if one sells one's house, or land, or jewels to another, we do what we like with the proceeds; and if one sells *one's self*" (she touched the ring upon her finger scornfully), "do you mean to tell me that one may not spend the purchase-money as one will?"

CHAPTER II.

GATHERED THREADS.


WHAT was the precise nature of that high crime and misdemeanour for which Mr. John Meyrick had to leave college suddenly, there is no need to inquire. There are persons within everybody's circle of acquaintance who have had to do the like, without an explanation being offered, and I think we take an interest in them on that very account. Mystery lends its charm to the most commonplace of mortals, and since the young squire has but few intrinsic merits of his own, let him have the benefit of that. Whatever was his error, we may be sure that it was complicated by "drink." He was not the man, as the phrase goes, to set Cam or Isis on fire, but he may have attempted, in his cups, to set fire to Minim Hall. At all events,

that institution had declined to retain him any longer. He was not privately withdrawn—recommended change of air by his medical adviser—but downright expelled. The old Squire at Casterton, not a person of delicate organization, was grievously shocked. The Meyricks had never been a brilliant family; but his son and heir was the first of his race who had publicly disgraced himself, and given such credible promise of going to the dogs. When all persons connected with the young man were, as it were, turning up their coat-sleeves, with the avowed intention of washing their hands of him, M. de Lernay came forward in the character of guardian angel. It was terrible that the prospects of a really well-meaning, though volatile young man should thus be blighted in the bud. There was only one way to keep him out of bad company, for which he had exhibited so overpowering a predilection: he must marry some girl of good connexions at once, and so be surrounded by a ring-fence of the Best Society for the rest of his existence.

Such a sovereign remedy was not, of course, to be

procured except at a great price. Miss de Lernay, the report of whose attractions had made Mrs. Meyrick rather uncomfortable at one time, was now no longer an ineligible bride for her only son. The Squire bluntly vowed that the young scamp might think himself lucky to get her. If Eugenie was not enamoured of this young gentleman just at present, as her father admitted, the dislike would doubtless soon wear off (as love does in unions of affection), and in the end, who knew but what she might become a happy wife, or, at all events, attain the average of married happiness? He was well convinced that he was acting for the best for all parties, including, of course, M. de Lernay. And were there not disadvantages in the arrangement for *him* also? Had he not been immolated for a week at the Grange at Casterton, whither he went in person, at the invitation of Mr. Meyrick, senior? Was it nothing to have breakfasted at half-past eight for six mornings running, and to have gone to church on the seventh? Was it nothing to have endured two dinner-parties, during which the conversation was confined to

field-sports and agricultural produce? Mr. Morrit had been the only civilized being he had met with in that melancholy exile, and even he was dull. He had been desolated, so it was said, by the undutiful conduct of his nephew. It was at Casterton that M. de Lernay learned for the first time the details of that matter, and identified in Mrs. Frederick Galton the sister of the man who had preserved his daughter from shame. He decided that Eugenie should, if possible, be kept in ignorance of this fact; any allusion to that dreadful adventure at Marseilles always gave her pain, and it was most foreign to his nature to give pain, if it could possibly be avoided. He was not for his part consumed with the desire of making himself known to the family of the late Mr. John Perling; but he had misgivings that his daughter might wish to do so, and it was one's duty to guard against an inconvenient enthusiasm. It was his very reticence in this matter, perhaps, that subsequently excited her suspicions, and led her to guess all, as we have seen, at the first mention of Mary Perling's name. For the rest, all had gone well.



Squire Meyrick had proved willing to purchase not only a wife for his ne'er-do-well offspring, but even a noble father-in-law, and that at his own price.

"My money was all meant for my boy," said the old squire with pathos ; "and whether he gets it now or after I am gone, is little matter."

"It cannot be better spent than on those who will keep him out of harm's way," responded the Frenchman feelingly. "In me, my dear sir, you are insuring for your son a passport to good society ; and every shilling which passes through my hands shall conduce to that end."

So both the village boys whom we first met on the Round at Casterton had married very young, yet neither was trusted with his own money.


Beyond all question, Frederick Galton had, for his part, been treated with great harshness in this respect. His own clandestine conduct had caused, it is true, the unfortunate disposition of his father's property ; but it was in his uncle's power to have remedied that mistake, and he ought to have done so. There are

many honourable men who are capable of acting with great injustice and cruelty, when smarting under personal insult. The very uprightness of their own character helps to steel them, and they seem to themselves to be advocating the cause of virtue, in avenging their peculiar wrong. The curate did not know to what very serious straits he was reducing his nephew, by confining his income to within such narrow limits; but he had a shrewd suspicion that he was putting him to great inconvenience, and his conscience pricked him upon that account. He was obliged to fortify his mind by quotations against *The Prodigal*, and by thoughts upon the necessity of the performance of painful duties. He was also, I fear, considerably strengthened in his determination by the reports which reached him of the language in which his nephew freely indulged when speaking of the Rev. Robert Morrit. Still his conscience pricked him. One day in particular, after the receipt of a letter from Mr. Jonathan Johnson, expostulating with him upon his harshness towards his once so beloved young relative, he was greatly moved.

"Do not deceive yourself," the editor had frankly written; "you are actuated in this matter by malicious feelings. Poverty is a bad school for one like Frederick Galton; if it sours him with the world, you will have done a great injury to a fellow-creature, and even some perhaps to the world itself. I admire his talents more than ever; but how is it possible that they can have any lofty aim, when it is necessary that they should purchase daily bread? You are answerable, Morrit, I repeat, for whatever happens; a shadowy menace, of course, to one who is a scoundrel, but one that should make a Christian gentleman consider a little."

Not a word had the crafty editor written concerning Mrs. Galton and the child; nothing to arouse the curate's prejudices, but everything to awaken his sense of justice. Mr. Morrit walked about his parish with his hands behind him all that day, revolving how he could give up an obstinate purpose without loss of dignity. And yet he was a kindly man by nature. It gave him genuine pleasure, for instance, that he was on

that very occasion the messenger of a great piece of good news to a crippled veteran of the wars who lived at the extremity of Casterton ; a man of honour like himself, and who had also suffered like him in his domestic relations. He had had an only son transported for sheep-stealing years ago, and the disgrace had so wrought on him, that when any one touched upon the subject, ever so tenderly, he would tremble and grow pale, as the pain of no ancient but unhealed bodily wounds (of which he had several) could compel to do. Now the curate was the bearer of an epistle from this very son, now a free man in the under-world, inclosing a bank-note for fifty pounds. "Please, reverend sir, persuade my dear old father to accept it"—so the son had written—"for I dare not send it to him direct, lest he should tear it up, or burn it, without remembering that I am still his son, and privileged to love and serve him yet." It was a most affecting letter, and the curate pleaded the writer's cause with earnest eloquence. But the old man would not be convinced. He flattered himself that he was performing an act of virtue in resisting



this appeal of his own flesh and blood to be allowed to do him service.

"No, sir," answered he; "you may send the money back—to the young man." (Here he gave a great gulp, endeavouring to swallow Nature herself, which is a tremendous feat before one gets used to it.) "Tell him I am glad that he is living a reformed life, and that he is sorry for what he has done. But, sir, I am an honest man myself; and I have enough, although it is but a little, to live upon. The country pays me what it owes me; there is no obligation there; and I had rather not be indebted to—to"—— Here the old man broke down, and hid his face in his thin brown fingers for a little.

"You are very proud and hard of heart," said the clergyman. "We should forgive and forget. Who are we that we should punish our fellow-creatures, who have already paid the penalty for their offences; and besides, John, this is your own son."

"Ay," said the old man, "my own blood: the only child of his dear mother."

"Think of that, John, and forgive him : if I have ever done you a good deed, think upon it, and forgive him, for my sake : nay, John, if God has been good to you—and you know how good he has been—do this for His sake, for it will be pleasing to Him."

It was pleasant to see the kind priest's eager face as he went about his Master's work, and pleaded His good cause.

"Well, look you, sir," returned the old man, "I scarcely know what it is right to do. You are the parson, and ought to know, that is true ; but then Talk is one thing, and Fight is another, as we used to say in the army."

"I have no cant about me, I hope," rejoined the curate quietly ; "I have given you what I believe to be good advice."

"Doubtless, sir ; but would you act upon it yourself ? Now, here is your nephew, Mr. Frederick Galton, as nice a young gentleman as ever these eyes lit upon, who had always a kind word and an open hand to the door. Many's the bit o' 'baccy I have had, thanks to

Master Frederick ; and now, because he's done wrong, and offended you, they do say you are very harsh to him, and keep him short in money matters. Of course, I know nothing of the truth of this—it may be so, or it may not be so—but I ask you as a gentleman who wouldn't tell a lie, have *you* forgiven *him* yet? Come, tell me that."

"Really, John"—began Mr. Morrit, stammering.

"No, sir, that ain't the way, nor like yourself—asking your pardon, though we are alone now, and God alone sees us, so there can be no offence: what I want is a plain 'Yes' or 'No.' Have you forgiven him, or do you mean to forgive him, and to let him have what he wants? Because if you mean to keep upon the same terms as now, why, then, *I* can't be wrong in sending that fifty pounds back to that young man in Australia, with a message that I will have nothing whatever to do with him: whereas, if you are really going to make up with Master Frederick, and pardon the poor young man, who used to be so fond of his uncle, and never so happy as when he was"—

"John! John!" cried the curate, very hoarsely, "say no more: you are a good man, and I thank you for what you have spoken."

"Then I may take the fifty pounds, sir, from my poor boy?"

"Yes, you may, John; you may indeed. O my poor Fred; my dear dead sister's son, why have we been estranged so long!" The rare tears stood once more in the curate's eyes, as they did in that of the pensioner. There was a double joy among the angels in heaven over that simple scene, for the preacher had converted the disciple, and the disciple the preacher. It is the privilege of the angels to rejoice over *all* repentance; we mortals, alas! can only appreciate that which bears fruit *in time*. Agree with thine adversary quickly while thou art in the way with him, says the Scripture; then how much more should we make peace with our own familiar friend—the Wronger or the Wronged, what matters?—while opportunity offers, and ere death or worse intervene, and close the golden gates of Friendship between us, with unexpected hideous jar.

CHAPTER III.

POTTS PÈRE.

ADVERSITY does not always and at once chasten him upon whom it falls ; the human soul is stubborn, and requires blow after blow to convince us of our own futility ; just as the gambler receives heavy and continued losses, before he can make up his mind that luck is against him, and that he had better throw up the cards. Like a mountain stream which seethes and rages with every cross and fall, is the proud man growing poor ; he may sink at last to some quiet level, out of sight and hearing, but in the meantime, the spectacle of his career does not make us in love with Poverty. How many an elastic spirit has been broken by the long, long pressure of that iron hand ! How many a genial nature has been soured, overflowed by the waters

of bitterness! It is very well to be philosophic, and better still to have Christian resignation; but to the poor contumacious creature under Dame Poverty's discipline, nothing seems so good as a five-pound note—save, of course, a note of higher value. It is wonderful how soon that situation which is euphoniously termed, "somewhat reduced circumstances," will deteriorate, not only a man's nature, but his views of human life. He will not only place a Wall Street value upon mere money, holding Esteem and Friendship, and sometimes even Love, but as so much "greenbacks," but he leaps to the conclusion, that everybody else is equally knowing—he has been a fool hitherto all his life, it seems, and hoodwinked by Society, but now at least he will let society know that he has found her out. This is in reality the chief cause why we drop our unprosperous friends. We omit them from our dinner-parties, not (unless we are very contemptible, indeed) because they can no longer invite us in return, but because their observations have become brusque and cynical.

Mr. Frederick Galton, at present of Somers Town, and

late of a number of different places of residence, further and further removed from the fashionable neighbourhoods, would unquestionably have been dropped by his numerous circle of friends, but for his exceeding cleverness. The genial charm of manner which was wont to draw so many within his influence, had fled, but it was replaced by a mocking wit. He made more enemies than friends wherever he went, but he was asked everywhere. He sparkled, and that was sufficient for those who invited him ; but the source whence the light was drawn was no longer the native fire of youthful gaiety ; he had now a reputation for saying "wicked things," and had become a sudden convert—the youngest ever known—to the great Pooh-pooh School, to whom the whole world of men and women is as an apple of the Dead Sea shore. As a writer, he was improving fast in style and manner, and the income he derived from his pen improved also, although at a less satisfactory rate. Among literary men, he had a wide acquaintance, and was very welcome with them ; they do not mind hard hitting ;

the free fight intellectual is popular among the Bohemians, and young Galton, late Mr. Jonathan Johnson's Novice, neither asked nor gave quarter to his opponents. This sort of society is by no means inexorable to one of their body who has made an imprudent match ; to marry, indeed, is a weakness in their eyes, but that feeling is evoked by the conventional nature of the Institution, and its exceeding and oppressive respectability, and Frederick had not sinned in those directions. Mrs. Galton might have been the rage among a pleasant and powerful section of the Community, had it pleased her so to be. Literary men—who have, by-the-by, the same objection to be designated by that title, as doctors have to be called medical men—are naturally simple and honest, notwithstanding their wild writing and wilder talk, and many of Frederick's friends fell honourably in love with his sweet wife. They swore that there was not a more genuine lady in all London, as there was not a more beautiful. Such of them as were artists (and many begin the battle of life armed with pencil as well as pen), were solicitous that she should

give them sittings for their Madonnas, for the Virtues, and for the more decent of the Heathen Goddesses. The adulation which they paid to her, pleased her husband, but not herself. She shrank, almost alarmed, from it and from them. She did not understand their intellectual fireworks : the light way in which they sometimes spoke of solemn things seemed to her irreverent and shocking ; when Frederick did so, she felt that somehow there was not the same wrong in that, for Love and Charity are one.

There are some women who seem most at their ease in male society, and not to need the companionship of their own sex ; but with Mary it was quite otherwise. She would have given worlds to lay her head upon her mother's bosom for one twilight hour, and hear her loving voice, while she herself wept on unnoticed ; or to listen to the thoughtful words of patient Sister Jane. It was almost a relief to her when their circumstances grew so narrow that her husband discouraged all would-be visitors to their humble home ; for though he had little personal pride,

he did not choose that people should see his wife in a shabby gown. Then the baby had come for a blessed companion to her ; and poverty and estrangement from her kith and kin, were more than compensated for by the intoxicating fact, that the child was indubitably like its father. The male parent modestly thought but little of this circumstance, and even rallied her upon it. "Why, my dearest love, I did not entertain the slightest apprehension that he would be like anybody else."

Frederick tore himself away without much difficulty from the society of that blessed babe. He was from home a great deal during both day and night. An apartment had been set aside for him at the office of the *Porcupine*, and there he wrote in the morning—composition at Somers Town being a work of difficulty, since there was but one sitting-room, and even that subject to sudden incursions of the maid-of-all-work, who, on the other hand, could be depended upon to keep away if one rang the bell. This desirable arrangement had, strange to say, been accomplished quite

lately by Mr. Percival Potts. When John Meyrick, upon that gentleman's authority, had made his depreciating remarks upon the Galtons, he was not quoting a very recent piece of scandal, although when Frederick's marriage had first become known, his collaborateur had been exceedingly hard upon him. Lord Cuckoo's party had got into power, and with it Potts. The sub-editor's paper had become the ministerial organ. He was a greater man than ever, and, of course, more impatient of contradiction. In his new position, he considered himself almost officially called upon to discountenance any social insubordination, such as an unequal marriage; and we may be sure that Frederick took less pains than ever to pay court to him. The literary club to which they belonged was transformed into a bear-garden whenever these two gentlemen happened to meet there, and Mr. Potts invariably came out of these conflicts second best. Prosperity had made him more overbearing, but not keener; while adversity had given a sting to the young man's wits, which made itself felt, notwithstanding the triple mail of self-

complacency in which his foe was encased. A combat between a whale and a sword-fish can only end one way.

It was while this internecine war was raging between them, that Mr. Frederick Galton happened to lose himself one morning, while essaying a short-cut from Somers Town into the civilized world. He got inextricably involved in a labyrinth of little streets all exactly like one another, and of which London contains whole towns. This particular town did not apparently boast of policemen, which was the more singular, since the contents of all the shops were emptied into the streets, and greatly exposed to larceny; so the young man stepped into a tailor's shop to ask the way. There were plenty of people standing at their doors on guard over their goods, of whom it would have been more convenient to inquire; but the tailor's shop had "Potts" written over it, and more than that, it had "P. Potts." This circumstance had a great attraction for Frederick, although not arising from the associations of Love. The window of this establishment was not

set forth after the skimpy manner of Bond Street, with one pair of elegantly-cut trousers and one elaborate waistcoat, but was crowded with articles of apparel, among which reclined (for there was something wrong with his knickerbockered legs) a waxen-boy, with a ticket round his neck such as blind men wear in charitable neighbourhoods. This youth, however, was perfectly wide awake (though he had six very distinct eyelashes upon each lid to shut, if he had been so disposed), and stared even to painfulness at those passers-by who could resist the attraction of "Youths' Complete Suits for the Public Schools at 1*l.* 4*s.* 6*d.*" Perhaps the semi-recumbent position was, after all, not owing to his legs so much as to the repeated disappointment of his expectations; for fashionable customers, having boys at a public school, and therefore requiring such distinguished garments, were far from numerous in that locality. The proprietor of this establishment, however, was a cheerful little old man, who, if he had had losses, had forgotten them. He was slightly hump-backed, and the professional attitude in which he sat

behind his counter, aggravated the appearance of that defect considerably ; a pair of scissors about the size of his own legs reposed by his side, and imparted to him a sort of pantomimic air.

“What can we do for *you*, sir ?” inquired this gnome of industry, of Frederick, looking sharply up, his bright beady eyes in curious contrast with his snow-white hair. “Is it coats, or vests, or is it—which I should think most likely—connubial does ?”

“I am afraid,” said Frederick smiling, “that you will think me but a shabby fellow, since I have only entered your shop to ask the way.”

“No,” said the little tailor, regarding the young man attentively through his horn spectacles, “I shall not think you that ; but unfortunately, I am the very last man you should have applied to by way of finger-post. I am but a poor creature, as you see, and seldom stir out of doors ; but if you will reach down that little packet of books yonder, I think there is a map of London among them, which, although not a new one, may perhaps serve your purpose.”

"Your literature is much more recent than your maps, however," observed Frederick. "Why, how is this? You have got the number of the *Porcupine* that only comes out to-day!"

"I have a friend connected with the—the establishment, who sends me a presentation copy every month," observed the little tailor, rubbing his hands. "I am a great admirer of the *Porcupine*. Don't you think, sir, that it is a very admirable magazine?"

"I do, indeed," said Frederick frankly, "although, perhaps, I should not say so, since I am personally concerned with it. But, my good friend, you don't read it, you don't even cut the leaves."

The young author was seriously chagrined to find that his own article of the current month, as well as those of the two preceding numbers, remained uninvaded by the paper-knife.

"I read some of it," returned the old man, taking up a copy: "see here, how dog-leaved and dirty the pages are. I have cried over those beautiful words like a young child."

"The author of that paper is a very clever writer," remarked Frederick drily.

"The cleverest, the best of them all," replied the tailor eagerly; "and he has got a kind heart too."

"How do you know that, my good man?"

"Because I—I see it here," returned the old fellow: "under all the coldness and glitter, there lies affectionate warmth, just as the teeming earth lies warm beneath the frost and snow."

"I shall see the gentleman to-day whose works you think so highly of, and I will tell him what a warm admirer he has got in—— Your name is Potts, is it not?"

"You will see him to-day!" cried the little old man enthusiastically, and dashing his scissors together as though they were triumphant cymbals. "Dear me, dear me!" He looked at Frederick, as schoolboys immured at Clapham on the Derby Day gaze on the folks bound for Epsom Downs. He was not the Rose, but he was about to be near the Rose. "Do you happen to be returning the same way, sir? Would

you mind looking in and telling me how you found him, as you go by. Would you mind it very much ? ”

“ I shall be very glad to do so,” returned Frederick, looking fixedly at his new acquaintance. “ I see that the initial of your Christian name is P. I cannot be far wrong in supposing that that stands for Percival. I am speaking to Percival Potts, father of the distinguished writer of that name, then ? ”

“ And whoever told you that ? ” inquired the little tailor, setting down his shears in blank amazement and dismay.

“ Why, you told me so yourself,” laughed Frederick, “ I assure you it is quite news to me ; ” and under his breath he added, “ and very great news, too.”

“ Look here, sir,” said the hunchback solemnly, rising with difficulty, and holding on to the counter with both hands ; “ I am old, and you are young ; I am weak, and you are strong ; you could kill me very easily, but it would be a shameful thing to do.”

“ A very shameful thing,” returned Frederick quietly. “ Who would dream of doing such a thing ? ”

"*You* would, sir; you are plotting it at this very minute; your young face, that was beautiful as a picture when you came in here, is grown ugly and cruel. You are going to tell my proud son that you have found his father. You are jealous of his great fame and name. Why did I not know that you were his enemy, at first sight?"

"Your son has done me much harm, old man," replied Frederick sternly; "but what I hate him most for is because he is ashamed of you."

"Don't say that, sir; pray, pray, don't say that," cried the old man piteously. "You don't know what a good son he is. He stocks my shop, sir; all that is here has been given by him: it does not signify to me—thanks to my Percy!—whether customers come or not. He would have put me in a villa in the country, if I had only said the word. Once every week—think of that—he comes and takes his tea—there in that little room, and listens to my stupid talk; he as might be in the king's own palace, or where not; yet he never disappoints me—never. It

isn't the shrimps and water-cresses as brings him, of course, but only me. O sir, pray spare him, spare him!"


"I am glad to hear he comes and sees you," said Frederick gravely.

"And *has* done, all his life," pursued the old man eagerly; "when he was only errand-boy about the newspaper-office in the north country, and worked twelve hours a day, and needed to be in the Institute at night for to train his mind, yet he always spared an hour to be with me. Why, he taught me to write and read, sir; he was my tutor—the teacher of his father—think of that—at twelve years old! Then, when he was reporter, with all his night-work, it was the same; he was never too tired to tell me all the news; and when I got my bad fall—he was sub-editor then—he would sit by my bedside and read until I forgot my pain, and sank to sleep."

"The better for him," said Frederick solemnly, "both now and hereafter."

"And all that time, sir, and notwithstanding all these

things, he was the perfect gentleman. 'Father, I intend to be a gentleman,' said he, looking up from his book one day, when he was but a child; and he has never faltered in his purpose. To see that boy pore over our few old books and records, in hopes to find out that he came of a good stock, was a wonderful sight; and when he had made it out to his own satisfaction that he did, I shall never forget it! Then he began to hate this tailoring trade; but I was wedded to it, and I couldn't do anything else. My poor dear wife, too, worked with her needle as well as any man; you are too young to know what a tie that is. It is ridiculous to you that an old misshapen tailor should speak of love. Ah, sir, you think my Percy proud; but his haughtiness is mere humility compared to the pride with which his mother regarded him. She would not have had him speak of her among the lords and ladies, look you, no, not for ten thousand pounds. It would have killed him, she well knew; the busy brain would have planned no more; the fiery wit would have been quenched for ever. And now,



if you wish to revenge yourself, young sir, for any slight which my son has put upon you, you can do so rarely; for you will not only kill your foe, but this poor worthless creature, too, his father. He will not reproach me, although it was I who would have the name written up above my door, because, forsooth, I said I was an honest man, and need not be ashamed of it; but I shall know that it was my fault all the same; all mine, all mine!"

The old man sank down into his old position, and feebly strove to go on with his work, but could not do so; the mighty scissors were too heavy for him, and fell from his nerveless fingers; his head dropped forward on his knee in cross-legged dejection. It was a spectacle to move a harder heart than Frederick's. "Old man," said he with feeling, "I had promised myself a great revenge upon your son."

"But you will spare him!" cried the tailor, looking up with eager hope; "your eyes are not cruel now."

"I will never breathe one word of what I know," replied Frederick earnestly, "not even to himself; but

when you see him next, tell him that Frederick Galton
—— You will not forget the name?"

"No, no; go on."

"That Frederick Galton had him in his power this day, but spares him for your sake, his father's sake—not his. Do you understand? No; give no thanks to me, but let him give thanks to that good father—he will know how good when he is gone—whose trusting and unselfish love has disarmed my hate."

The young man reached his hand across the counter, and took the tailor's feeble palm within his own. In another moment, he was away upon his road. They had met together for one half-hour upon life's pilgrimage, and were never to meet again in this world; yet what esteem had been won upon one side, what gratitude extorted upon the other! What new and blessed belief in their fellow-creatures had been suddenly grafted, at least, upon one of them! What charity! what generous forbearance!

Percival Potts was more intolerable than usual at the club that night—more despotic, more oppressive

with quotation, more boastful of his ancient lineage, and of the knightly deeds of his ancestors in the grand old times ; but his youthful foe never once laid lance in rest against him. He thought, with almost terror, of the idea that had once taken possession of him, of exposing this poor boaster in the midst of his wonderful lies ! What a crime would he have therein committed, in ruining one who was never so poor but he could help his parent, who was never so ignorant but he imparted to him what little he knew, who was never so occupied but he had time to attend to his wants in need and sickness. It is true that this man was contemptible enough from one point of view, even as a son. But, upon the whole, had poor Dr. Galton had as good reason to be proud of his offspring as had the little tailor in Wigwam Street ? Had Frederick never been ashamed (in Grosvenor Square, for instance), of one, not a relative, indeed, but who should have been nearer and dearer than all relatives ? The young man, disarmed by thoughts like these, laid aside all his barbed talk. He was not conciliatory, because

conciliation towards men of the Potts calibre is merely an invitation to them to be insulting; but he kept an unwonted silence. The toadies and flatterers whispered to one another: "He has knocked under. The comb of this young fighting-cock has been cut at last."

Upon the next meeting of the club, this opinion was expressed more openly, in the absence of its subject, by some unhappy slave, who, seeking to please the Tyrant, received on his astonished ears a buffet which (intellectually) sent him sprawling.

"*Sæva tene*," said he,

" 'tympana, quæ subsequitur cæcus Amor sui

El tollens vacuum plus nimio gloria verticem.'

Be silent, sir; you are not fit to hold a candle to the man whom you revile."

And when the young gentleman himself entered the apartment, Percival Potts went forward to the door to meet him (as the pope welcomes emperors of whose conduct he approves), and gave him a hand-grasp full of meaning.

"Let us be friends, Galton, henceforth," he whispered.

"But I am afraid I have not married a person of sufficiently distinguished family," rejoined Frederick smiling.

"You need not trouble yourself on that account," answered the ready Potts.

" *Ne sit ancillæ tibi amor pudori*
Xanthia Phoeu; prius insolentem
Serva Briseis niveo colore
Movit Achillem."

I am charmed to hear that I am to meet you at the Meyricks', and only wish Mrs. Galton was to accompany you; her very looks would be a success, not only for a charade, but for a five-act play.

"*Fuge suspicari*
Cujus octavum trepidavit ætas
Claudere lustrum."

"I never *was* jealous of you," returned the young man, with a bold but pleasant smile.

"I do believe it, Galton," cried the sub-editor frankly; "and I wish I could say the same of myself. But if I am not naturally magnanimous, I have at least the power of appreciating magnanimity in other people."


There is no necessity for many words in the bond which unites persons of genius; but if I have dwelt somewhat long upon the circumstance which gained Frederick Galton a powerful friend for life, it is because I see an ink-black cloud at hand, obscuring all the firmament of his being—a terrible time, when he will need friends indeed. The prescient author sympathizes with the loved objects of his creation, and when he seems to procrastinate their good fortune, it is because he perceives the shadow of the coming woe draw nigh.

CHAPTER IV.

VI ET ARMS-A-KIMBO.

THE phrase "He hasn't a shilling," has a very variable meaning, and the value of that coin is as difficult to define as what is a pound. When applied to a lucifer-match seller in the public streets, it means twelve pence; and when used in reference to the younger son of a duke, it rises to five thousand pounds. Thus, although it was currently reported that Mr. Frederick Galton had not a shilling "to call his own," "to bless himself with," "to swear by," &c. &c. (for there is no end to the phrases with which even the most prosaic delight to honour their idol Mammon), he had always in reality his pockets full of money. Nothing (he used to aver) was so distressing to him as to be without a few sovereigns in his waistcoat;

not necessarily to spend, but to be ready to spend, in case of an emergency. "Everything that is beautiful to the eye, or pleasant to the taste, is mine," quoth he, "in the highest and best sense, if I can but command the price of it. The capability of possession is equal to the possession itself, and, at all events, nips envy in the bud. Directly I feel that evil passion rise, I say to myself: 'Frederick, Frederick, if this is not put a stop to at once, I go in and purchase that expensive article.'" Perhaps he was sometimes compelled by this inexorable logic to commit little extravagances; but certain it is, in spite of his assertion that he never spent anything, that the golden lining of his waistcoat pockets had not seldom to be renewed. This could only be done by omitting to pay for vulgar necessities, which every day appeared to him a duty less and less incumbent; for getting into debt is like going to sea, when you are once there, it matters very little whether you ride in ten-fathom water or a hundred; and the longer you keep afloat, the more accustomed you get to the danger.



I am afraid he was very much encouraged in this personal extravagance—for such it was in a man of his position—by his wife. Mary thought nothing too good, or good enough, for her paragon of a husband ; she did not know the full extent of his embarrassments, but she knew that it became her to practise every kind of domestic economy. When he went out to his fine dinners, to which she was not invited, he would often lay strict injunctions upon her to treat herself to some delicacy for her lonely meal, and she would appear to comply with his wishes, really thankful for the loving thought that dictated them ; but it always ended in bread and cheese. That was the sort of supper which she had been used to all her life, and why should she object to it now ? But her Frederick had been brought up in a very different manner, and it was only right that he should deny himself nothing.

“Go and enjoy yourself, my own love, by all means,” was her cheerful reply, whenever his conscience pricked him into self-reprobaton for leaving [her so much at home and alone. She did not use that phrase in any

sarcastic sense, as some wives do, and even added : “ I never feel so happy, Frederick, as when I think that you are so, and that I am no impediment to your pleasure.” Nor let it be imagined that the lord of this Patient Griselda was a selfish and unfeeling fellow, who never thought of his wife when he was away from her, and took all her self-abnegations for his sake as a matter of course. He was merely such a husband as any man, however loyal and affectionate-hearted, is likely to become, who marries a woman who has adored, and continues to adore him ; a class of domestic female, however, not so common as to arouse apprehension of any very wide-spread deterioration of the male sex.

But when the door of that little residence in Somers Town had closed behind its temporary proprietor (for they were only in lodgings) for the whole day (unless when he returned late in the afternoon to dress for dinner, and then went forth again in glorious apparel for the entire evening and far into the night), poor Mary Galton experienced a sense of desolation to which she

never owned. If her husband could have looked into her heart as she bade him smiling farewell every morning, he would have turned back in bitter penitence, and called himself a multitude of derogatory names; but he only saw the beautiful face with the sunshine on it—for how could she do otherwise than smile while he was in sight?—and knew nothing of the shadow that fell over it a moment afterwards. She and her child were henceforth left, not only among strangers, but enemies. Every ring at the door-bell was a hostile summons. The butcher, the grocer, and the baker attacked the house every morning by regular approaches, and even threatened to cut off the supplies of the little garrison. A guerilla warfare was ceaselessly carried on by the milkman and the washerwoman. Besides these, there was an enemy within-doors, more terrible than any, in Mrs. Gideon the landlady. She was full of strange expressions, “Gad-amercy!” “Odds my life!” &c. &c. sounding to poor Mary like oaths; and she protested, in a vehement manner, that she had waited long enough, and that she

should like to see the colour of Mrs. Galton's money most uncommonly. It was poor Mary's task, thus subject to perpetual "alarms and excursions" from within and without, not, indeed, to repulse the invaders, for that was impossible, but to stave them off until that good time which her husband assured her was approaching, and above all things to keep him as ignorant as possible of their excessive importunity. He took anything unpleasant so very much to heart, that all bad news must be kept from him; annoyances such as these would worry him to death; and it was best, since he could not cure them, that he should know nothing about them. Of course, it was a mistaken policy, but nobody could have carried it out with more success. Even the butcher was melted by the beauty of this sweet-spoken debtor, who came out with her lovely child in her arms to beg that the bill might be allowed to run a little longer. The more obdurate creditors were those of her own sex, and of these the worst was Mrs. Gideon. She was naturally coarse, and even cruel, and poor Mrs. Galton was very much afraid

of her indeed. Why she did not attack Frederick himself, I cannot tell ; perhaps her savage breast was moved by his good looks, as that of the butcher was moved by Mary's ; perhaps she was a coward, in spite of her loud tones and arms a-kimbo ; but, at all events, certain it is that her fiercest onslaughts upon her present lodgers were made in the absence of the principal offender.

It was getting late on an afternoon in June, and Mrs. Galton having returned fatigued from a dusty walk with her nurse and son-and-heir, was helping to put the latter to bed, when there came a rap at the nursery door, and enter Mrs. Gideon, with a pottle of strawberries in her hand, and a determination of blood to her head, from a combination of three causes—Rum, Running upstairs, and Passion. “A pretty thing,” cried she, “Gadamercy, not to have paid me a silver sixpence these two months, and then to order strawberries at eighteenpence a pottle, and my fool of a servant to pay the money, which she might just as well have thrown into the dirt. Strawberries, bedad !”

Poor Mary clutched her half-dressed child to her bosom, in case instant flight should be necessary, and addressed the Fury in mitigation.

"I know nothing about them, Mrs. Gideon, and certainly have ordered nothing of the kind myself. I will pay you, however, the eighteenpence with pleasure. I daresay my kind husband told them to send them in for me at tea-time, and purposely did not pay for them, that they might be sure to be sent."

"Your *kind* husband!" rejoined the landlady, with contemptuous pity. "Ah, he's very kind, no doubt, and especially with other people's money. Why, you poor little fool, haven't you seen through *him* yet, and you his wife? Why, when you came here first, says I to myself: 'He can surely never have made her an honest woman, or she would never put up with such treatment.'"

"Mrs. Gideon," answered Mary, pale as ashes, but trembling much more with anger than with fear, "I do not know what to say to one like you, except that you are not telling the truth."

"Hoity-toity, one like me!" quoth the landlady, with a scornful laugh; "and who are you, then, Whey-face? There must be *something* wrong about you, or else your man wouldn't leave you every day, and all day long, in this fashion. Why, how do I know but what he may go away some fine morning, and never come back at all, but leave you and your squalling baby by way of payment for the rent?"

"When he comes back to-night, woman," returned Mary, quietly, "it will be for the last time to this house; I am quite sure of that. He will never"—here her voice sank into a sort of pitiful soliloquy—"never leave me under this roof alone again."

"But you will go from here to jail," continued the virago, stamping upon the floor with passion. "If I can get my dues no other way, I will get it out of your skin. There are men in the house now who will see me righted. I swore I would do it, and I have done it. Your young gentleman will find a guest in the parlour whom he has not invited."

The little nursery, with its diabolical figure in the

foreground—space-monopolizing, terrible as the helmet in the Castle of Otranto—swam round before Mary's eyes. Her little maid, her only ally, had fled in panic. She did not know that much of the threatened evil was mere malicious menace; while she felt that the woman herself would not hesitate to push a cruel law as far as it would go. Already she beheld her husband hauled to prison—her husband, against whom a few minutes ago she had thought it sacrilege even to hear this woman speak. Her child was moaning at her breast, as though to remind her that he, too, was about to be whelmed in the coming ruin. "My God!" cried she in agony, moving the thick masses of hair from her forehead, and trying to think, "how *can* I—*can* I save him?"

"By paying the money!" answered the landlady with abrupt intelligence, the bare idea of such a satisfactory arrangement giving distinctness to her speech, and steadiness to her erratic eyes. "30*l.* 14*s.* 4½*d.*, much of which has gone out of my own pocket. You ain't got it, you as eats strawberries at 1*s.* 6*d.* the pottle—no, not you; nor your husband neither, for all his

fine feathers—of which I'll pluck him this very night, mind you, or else my name ain't Sarah Gideon. Here's the bill, ma'am, which I leave upon this table ; perhaps you would like to examine the items."

"Receipt it!" observed a clear sweet voice, falling on the ear like nightingale after screech-owl.

"A lady splendidly attired, but with a thick veil falling from her bonnet, and almost entirely concealing her features, was standing within the room ; her speech was directed to the landlady, but her eyes were earnestly fixed upon the face of the young wife. "There are pen and ink, woman, and here is the money. Sign!"

"Which I am humbly thankful for, mem," said Mrs. Gideon, courtesying, after a rather elaborate examination of the watermarks of the bank-notes ; "and if I have been somewhat hasty in my language, having been worried with spasms all the day (as I hope may never be the case with either of you, ladies), and gin and peppermint next to useless, perhaps it may be forgotten and forgiven.—May I help you to take your

bonnet and shawl off, my pretty gentlewoman?" Mrs. Gideon was about to suit the action to the word, but the stranger drew herself up with contemptuous dignity, and once more pointed to the table.

"Sign and be silent! That will do."

The termagant was endeavouring to frame some false and fawning words to address to her late victim, who had sunk down in a half-swoon into a chair, but the new-comer motioned her away. "Have you not done enough mischief by your talk already, woman!" said she, sternly. "Mrs. Frederick Galton is not accustomed to deal with drunken folks. *I am*. Now leave the room."

CHAPTER V.

EAVES-DROPPING.

RELIEVED from immediate terror of Mrs. Gideon, which had frozen the very fountain of life within her, Mary regarded her unknown preserver through a mist of tears. "I cannot help crying a little," said she humbly; "but I do feel so very grateful. Heaven bless you! See, my child blesses you, for to me at least his smile is a blessing."

"Weep on, kind heart," returned the stranger, putting aside her veil, and regarding the young mother with affectionate yearning. "It is well to have eyes that have not forgotten how to weep."

"That surely cannot be your case," answered the other earnestly. "It is not possible that one so young,

and fair, and rich in this world's goods, can be in such sad plight as that."


"It is very possible," replied the visitor, with a sorrowful smile; "but I am not come here to talk about myself, Mary."

"Mary! Why, how is it you know my name? I never saw you in all my life before; of that, I am sure; since, having seen you, no one could have forgotten you."

The undisguised admiration in the young wife's countenance was suddenly exchanged for a look of embarrassment.

"I know now," added she, with a slight colour mounting to her cheeks; "you must be Eugenie de Lernay."

"I did bear that name once, but I am married now." Mrs. John Meyrick could not repress a sigh as she said these words. Mrs. Frederick Galton sighed too when she heard them, but it was a sigh of relief. Eugenie interpreted it as clearly as though the other had said: "I am glad you are a married woman: it is bad enough



that you should have come here to help my Frederick, as it is ; but if you had been single, the thing would have been intolerable." She would far rather have been in the power of Mrs. Gideon than indebted to this young beauty.

"Mary, dear, listen to me," continued she gravely. "I like and admire your husband, as all must do who know him, but it is not on his account that I am come here to-day. I am come to visit Mary Perling, the sister of a man whose name has been in my prayers night and day for years—a dead man, but one who will never die out of my heart."

"Did you love Charles?" inquired Mary with wondering eyes. "You must have been very, very young."

"I love him, but I never saw him," returned Eugenie. "It is a long, sad story, and I have no time to tell it now ; but, Mary, when I tell you that he saved my sister—gone to heaven long since—from shame, you will not wonder that I am here, having heard by happy chance of your need ; that I fall on my knees before you thus, and kiss you with no Judas lips, but because

I love you dearly, and take your baby in my childless arms, and pray that I may yet, though late, be some little help and comfort to him and to you."

She took the child, still smiling in her face, and caressed it tenderly; and as the mother watched her, the lingering shades of doubt dissolved and faded from her pure white brow.

"How good it is of you to have come here, Eugenie—I may call you Eugenie, may I not? What a kind face you have—yet somehow, I used to think you cold and haughty. You cannot be very proud to have come here, and to *me*."

"*Proud!*" returned the other bitterly. "If I be so, being what I am, then must I be proud indeed. It is only very lately that I learned who you were; and since then—— Look you, Mary dear, I am a very wretched woman. I have no husband to love, as you have. I am married to a sot, and worse (that is why I look so hard); in whom the demon of Drunkenness has been exorcised of late only to make room for the fiend of Jealousy. I am watched, and tracked, and suspected—

though I do not even know of what—and therefore it was not easy to get to see you. But I am so glad that I *have* seen you at last; we two will be firm friends. Hush! what was that?" Mrs. John Meyrick turned deadly pale and trembled.

"That is Frederick!" cried Mary joyfully; "I know the sound of his latchkey. Let us go down stairs: how glad he will be to see you! But, Eugenie, do not say a word about that dreadful scene with Mrs. Gideon. It would annoy him beyond measure; I will only tell him how kind you have been in lending us"—

"Not a word, not a syllable about that, Mary. That is between you and me only. When you become very rich, and calculating, and unkind, you shall pay me, if you please. If you feel distressed at owing me a few pounds, what ought I to feel, who have never even acknowledged my great debt to your dead brother!"


Mary returned the prettiest answer in all the feminine vocabulary.—a kiss.

"Why, Eugenie, how cold your lips are; I am afraid that woman frightened you, although you did behave so


bravely. Lay the child down in the cot, and let me bring you a glass of water. I can get it fresh from the tap in Frederick's dressing-room, and be back in an instant."

She was not away much longer, but in the interim the little mirror hanging by a nail on the wall reflected a charming face with a rose-flush on either cheek. There was no danger of Eugenie "looking a fright," but every woman likes to be certified that there is nothing amiss with her hair before presenting herself to anybody, except, perhaps, her lawful husband; nor do I believe that the Pig-faced Lady herself was ever left alone with a looking-glass without taking advantage of the opportunity.

Of course, there is such a thing as Platonic love, but there is always a certain embarrassment upon at least one side, when a young gentleman and a young lady who have made themselves mutually agreeable while single, meet for the first time after their marriage to "another." If they have both married, this embarrassment is shared by each, and yet by no means



diminished. The female, however, is always most at ease, and generally manages to possess herself of what vantage-ground the situation affords. Eugenie descended to the sitting-room with the heir of the house Galton in her arms, put in, as it were, in evidence of her new position as friend of Frederick's wife. Poor Frederick wished himself for the moment the father of twins, in order that he might at least establish his claim, by means of No. 2, to the status of a family man. He had not seen Mrs. Meyrick since that interview at Camford, in which her intended had made them both so uncomfortable by his clownish wrath. He knew, although Mary had never breathed a word of it, that his own wife was not without a tinge of jealousy of the fair Eugenie; so well was he aware of this, that he had not thought it judicious to communicate the fact, that he was going out to the Meyricks' the very next evening to take his part in acting charades. It is lawful to tell everything to one's own wife, but it is sometimes not expedient. The invitation had come from M. de Lernay, whom he did not like, and was




dated from the house of a man whom he intensely despised; his acceptance must therefore have been given in the hope of meeting somebody else than they; and now he had unexpectedly met that person beforehand.

Frederick and Eugenie shook hands warmly.

"You are very cruel, Mr. Galton, to have hidden your charming wife away from me thus long. I have taken upon myself to make the first call, and that must be returned, if you please. I do not ask her to accompany you to our house to-morrow evening, because it will be an entertainment unsuited, if I guess right, to her taste. It is one, at least, which, if I could, I myself would willingly avoid."

"I have been asked by Monsieur de Lernay to take part in a scene from Shakespeare," explained Frederick, a little awkwardly. "It is a most innocent rôle, my dear Mary, I do assure you; I am going to be Portia in the 'Merchant of Venice.'"

"I should dearly like to see you act him," said Mary innocently.



"It's not a 'him' at all, my love," observed Frederick, twining his fingers in one of Mary's golden locks. His tone was as loving as his action, but both the women knew that he was much annoyed at the mistake.

"No lady can be got to play the part," remarked Eugenie, hastily; "a London drawing-room audience is so censorious. It was so very kind of your husband to undertake it."

These well-meant platitudes failed, as usual, in the intention of putting at their ease those to whom they were addressed. Mary hung her head, ashamed of having given her husband cause to be ashamed of her. Frederick was ashamed of himself because he had blushed even for an instant for his own wife in the presence of Eugenie. "Surely," whispered his conscience, "such love as hers might have excused the want of learning." These three persons were in a position the reverse of that occupied by the man in the fable in charge of the fox, the goose, and the measure of corn. Any two of them would have been


charming company, and would have done one another no harm ; but the three together had nothing to say for themselves whatever. It would have been felt a relief by all when the clock on the stairs struck six, and Eugenie rose hastily to depart, had it not been for the apprehension expressed in her countenance. Cinderella, when she overstayed her hour at the king's ball, could not have looked more scared.

"I had no idea it was so late," exclaimed she. "Is there a cab-stand near, Mr. Galton? Would you kindly let somebody show me where it is? I should lose time by sending for a vehicle; and I have not one moment to spare."

"I will go with you myself, Mrs. Meyrick, if you must really leave us so soon. We shall not find a cab very near at hand, I fear."

The two young women hurriedly embraced one another. "Dearest Mary," whispered Eugenie, "please believe that you are henceforth my sister."

The next moment she was gone. It was raining heavily when she and Frederick Galton stepped into



the little street, and there was at that time no other passenger, from end to end of it, save themselves. He had scarcely, however, put his umbrella up, and taken her arm, when the swing-door of a public-house at the corner slowly opened, and an evil face looked after them cunningly. It must have been watching through some cranny beforehand, or it could scarcely have so nicked the time. It was just such a face as may be seen at the door of any gin-shop—its custom always of an afternoon to *be* there—but the figure and dress were scarcely consonant with it. Drunkenness had as yet made no inroads upon this individual's purse, or at least his credit, for he was attired very handsomely; and if he had pawned his undercoat, an excellent sur-tout, at all events, concealed its absence, as it also hid the greater part of his person. The high collar was turned upwards, so that, if he had not protruded his red nose and lobster eyes, as he did in his malign curiosity, his best friend (if he had one) would scarcely have been able to recognise him. His hat, too, was not a drunkard's hat, by any means, but a recent acquisition

from Lincoln and Bennett's, such as most people would keep under cover until such a shower as that which was now flushing Somers Town was overpast. This gentleman, however, merely tilted that article of property over his eyes to hide his fiery face still more completely, and stepped swiftly after the two receding figures. The rain so pelted down upon pavement and gutter, that Frederick and Eugenie did not hear his footsteps even when he drew close behind them, but went on with their talk, arm in arm, with their faces very close together, as must needs happen when two individuals wish to converse in storm-time under a limited umbrella. Although they had had such a little start of the eavesdropper, it was already difficult for him to pick up the thread of their discourse, interrupted, moreover, as it was by the same cause which enabled himself to remain so near without discovery.

"Shall I tell you why I came here, Mr. Galton?" Mrs. Meyrick was saying. "It must have seemed a very strange thing to do."

"It is quite unnecessary to speak of it, Eugenie; I

have known all that you would tell me, long, long ago. Generous"— Here the listener slipping upon a loose stone in the pavement, received a douche-bath from below, and was thrown out by the interruption for the next twenty words; and twenty words left out in a conversation of which we do not possess the key, makes the scent rather cold. How was this too curious wretch to know that the last subject had been dropped very suddenly, and the topic of old Dr. Hermann promptly introduced by Frederick to supply the hiatus?

"Dear kind man!" returned Mrs. Meyrick. "That was a very, very happy time."

If the fellow who was thus dogging the unconscious pair, had in reality received that "facer" which his baseness so richly deserved, it could scarcely have staggered him more than did those few words. He started back, and glared upon the speaker, as she slowly increased her distance from him, like one who has caught it "well from the shoulder." He had not an intelligent countenance, but a countenance does not require much intelligence to express concentrated hate.

"Dear kind devil!" muttered he through his clenched teeth. "And I have thought sometimes I was pretending to be jealous only to frighten her. It was well I tracked her here." A cab dashed up to him, and its driver, attired in some shining waterproof garment, cried: "All right; jump in, sir."

The young man answered him with a curse, and began to walk hurriedly on. "Why, you scaly war-mint," said the cabman, keeping beside him at a trot, "what d'yer mean, then, by hailing this here vehicle with your stupid arm working about like a mad semaphore? You should wear a straight-jacket, *you* should, leastways unless you've got plenty of sixpences to pay for calling people off the rank. Darn ye, but you *shall* pay!" Here he drove off at a gallop, catching sudden sight of the pair in advance, and rightly judging that any two in the bush—his possible fares—were greatly preferable to the ill-conditioned bird at present in hand. The latter, perceiving his purpose, stood still, and watched Frederick place Eugenie in the vehicle; watched him close the umbrella, as though he would

have entered after her ; watched her shake her head and smile ; watched her gloved hand thrust forth from the window, taken into Frederick's palm, and raised to his lips.

"I shall see you to-morrow ; be sure you come," were the last words spoken at the farewell. Eugenie raised her voice so as to drown the noise of the wheels, and they reached not only Frederick Galton's, for whom they were intended, but the ears of her husband, John Meyrick, also.

"To-morrow, you jade," hissed he, as he turned upon his heel, and hastily retraced his steps ; "something may happen then which is not in your programme. If, instead of that Shylock trash, we could have that scene I saw at the play the other night, where the black man strangles his wife ! Damn me, but I would act it to the life, and stop your cooing for good and all."

CHAPTER VI.

THE DRAWING-ROOM AND SECOND FLOOR.

THERE is an offensive story, often quoted against private theatricals, which relates that a great professional actor having been indiscreetly asked his opinion regarding the merits of a certain amateur performance, and having in vain declined to give it, delivered himself thus: "You ask me, Mr. Stage-manager, which of your admirable company I like best; well, without being invidious, I must say I prefer your prompter."

"Dear me, sir, why the prompter?"

"Because I have seen least of him, and heard most of him."

This is bitter satire, but private theatricals have managed to survive it. The fact is, that the sarcasm is founded upon the mistaken notion, that it is the

audience which our amateur company desire to please ; whereas their primary, if not their sole intention is to please themselves. The one or two nights in which they give their final representation, are indeed devoted to the former object. But the real charm in the undertaking lies in the details of "production ;" in the mistakes at rehearsals, in the going to school again with charming young women for our teachers, and in the Bohemian and unconventional manner in which an acting company must needs live together. There is no pleasanter way of passing a few weeks' holidays than as one of a *corps dramatique* which has been gathered together in some country-house to entertain the "county" at the month's end, and in the meantime to entertain one another. The very makeshifts and contrivances which it is necessary to employ in our improvised Theatre-royal, afford intense amusement ; so does the stage love-making, so often prolonged beyond the dramatic season ; the being husband, lover, uncle, and all sorts of relations, to persons of the other sex whom we have never before set eyes on in our

lives; the impossibility of remembering some ridiculous speech out of the farce at the right moment, and the certainty of its recurring with extreme importunity at the most untimely seasons, such as during that choral service which the Tractarian rector has instituted in the village church; the application of gold-leaf to the elaborate playbills—one of the most charming occupations in which male and female labour ever combined; and the having one's eyebrows corked and one's moustaches adjusted by a lovely female standing on tiptoe, and regarding, head aside, the effect of her artist touches. All this is delightful, but the bliss is peculiar to the country; in town, I humbly submit that private theatricals are a mistake. The Londoners seem to be aware of this, and rarely hazard comparisons, in their own private houses, with the performances at the theatres. They confine themselves to charades (a hateful institution), or tableaux, or detached scenes; these last being generally determined upon in order to bring out some gentleman who has peculiar views as to the delineation of a character like

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that of Hamlet, and who intends to cause Fechter to be forgotten.

If M. de Lernay had any views respecting the impersonation of Shylock, they were undoubtedly peculiar; but, to do him justice, he had none at all. His proposal to take the part was but the whim of the moment, and would not have been carried out but for the opposition which it met with, and which piqued him. If he had seriously considered the question of asking Frederick Galton to Park Lane, he would probably have dismissed it as an inconvenient, if not a dangerous step. But the suggestion, fallen from him without reflection, had been received with such extreme disfavour that the old despot made up his mind to carry his point at all hazards. It would never do, reasoned he, to let John Meyrick re-assert himself as master of his own house. The Frenchman, indeed, considered his own position with respect to this good-for-nothing as very similar to that of a horse-breaker with a vicious and powerful steed; he must not suffer such a hard-mouthed runaway to get his

head again even for once. I do not say that this course was not a very proper one in respect to Mr. John Meyrick, had he been alone concerned in the matter; but M. de Lernay, intoxicated with power, and rejoicing in the exercise of it to the uttermost, forgot that his victim was also his son-in-law. What Eugenie suffered while her father thus reigned supreme, none will ever know till that great Day of Revelation, in which the blackest page of human wickedness will perhaps be found among the stainless records of married life.

Since it had thus been decided that the long interrupted acquaintance with Frederick Galton was to be renewed, the ever-smouldering embers of jealousy in John Meyrick's heart had burst into lurid flame. If he had not given up drink, as Eugenie had hinted, for the more complete reception of this passion, drink at least had failed to quench it. He had watched, and spied, and tracked his unhappy wife, until at last the wicked fool had heard, as he imagined, with his own ears, the truth of his suspicions. He had no idea of the real reason which had taken his wife to Somers

Town; he had marked her furtively leave her home, and followed her to the cab-stand from which she had been driven to Frederick's house; she little knew that her husband was never more than thirty yards behind the vehicle during that long drive. He had stopped his own cab short of the door, and concealing himself, as has been described, in a congenial hiding-place, had met the fate of most eaves-droppers, in making himself miserable upon grounds misunderstood as well as insufficient. Wretched and furious, he had betaken himself to his old weakness—brandy; whether as a means of temporary forgetfulness, or in order to nerve himself for some terrible revenge, it matters not. At all events, he had overdone the dose, and been brought home early on the morning of the theatricals in a state of hopeless stupefaction. His valet had put him to bed in his dressing-room (as he had often done before) with the remark, that he had never knowed master "cut so deep;" and there he lay all through the ensuing day. The fashionable world, which demands so much, does not require that the giver of any enter-

tainment should himself be present, so long as there is a sufficiency of things more needful; and they listened to the mournful intelligence that Mr. Meyrick was too indisposed to dispense his own hospitality with the most philosophic equanimity. The reception-rooms rang no less with polite laughter, nor did the drawing-room audience withhold their applause at the Shakspearian representation.

M. de Lernay had "made up" for Shylock to admiration; no detective, however skilled in unmasking the human face divine, could have recognised the features of the airy Frenchman beneath his borrowed beard and brows. So charmed was he himself with the impersonation, that he maintained his disguise throughout the evening, when dancing had long been substituted for the drama, and the other performers did the like. I don't think Mr. Jonathan Johnson quite approved of masquerading to this extent, but he was never suffered to conclude his sentence of objection, beginning with "What's the goo—goo—good"—

" 'I'll not answer that,' "

quoted M. de Lernay, with Judaic accent ;

*“ ‘ But say, it is my humour
Yet can I give no reason, nor I will not.’ ”*

Mr. Percival Potts, on the other hand, was not displeased to strut, an hour or two longer, upon the social stage, as Duke of Venice.

As for Portia, the universal female voice decreed that Frederick should remain the lady-lawyer he had played so faultlessly, and that without rehearsal.

“ ‘ You press me far, and therefore I will yield,’ ”

he had answered gallantly in Shakspeare's words, and kept his wig and gown on. This personation of the assumed characters was a good idea, for it did away with that stiff-backed monotony which is the curse of our social entertainments, and which led one of our modern statesmen to sigh forth : “ Ah, what a happy thing would life be but for its amusements, and especially if there were no such thing as a ‘ little music ’ in the world ! ” It was altogether a very pleasant party, and a decided success. The ordinary

guests did not leave until day had dawned; and those who had taken part in the performance, until much later. M. de Lernay, who had played the host with uncommon grace, would not hear of their earlier separation: "I have scarcely touched a bit of supper all night," said he; "if I am not to have my pound of flesh, at least let me have some chicken salad, and pay me the compliment of sitting down with me—your Grace the Duke, Antonio and the rest, come, a parting glass of champagne, an' you love me."

Quite a different sort of scene from this was enacting upstairs. The real host had come to his senses early in the evening, and had risen and dressed himself. When all was done, he caught sight of himself in the cheval glass, and then turned it to the wall. There was something in his own face that terrified him, and being afraid that others would see it, he did not venture down stairs. The noise of music and laughter came up to him in gusts as the doors below happened to be opened, and his countenance grew harder and harder as he listened. "He would change all that presently—

yes, by Heaven, he would—and with a vengeance.” Would he? A dampness settled on his brow. He was dwelling upon some image of horror conjured up in his own mind. With shaking fingers, he unlocked a little cabinet that stood by the bedside; it was a bijou of a cabinet, intended to hold some of the elegancies of the toilet, but what it did hold was a bottle of brandy and a wine-glass. He helped himself once—twice. “Curse the people, would they never go?” The early dawn poured into the room, showing everything with painful distinctness, for, since he had been put to bed in the daytime, the shutters had not been closed. The carriages which had been conveying away the guests unceasingly for some time grew few and far between. The last had surely driven away by this time. He raised the window, and looked out: no, there was one carriage waiting still, the brougham which Mr. Percival Potts had set up on the strength of his connexion with the ministry. “Well, he would perhaps have something to put in the second edition of his paper that evening.” The aroma of tobacco was wafted upward

from beneath the porch. Two young men stepped forth, one of whom Meyrick recognised as an old college acquaintance.

"Let me take a light from your cigar," observed the other, who was a stranger, and they stopped under the window. "What a jolly—puff, puff—evening we've had. I'm deuced glad I went, and much obliged to you for taking me. What a stunner that Mrs. Meyrick is! Which was her husband?"

"He was not there at all," answered the man known to Meyrick; "they said he was ill. I believe he is killing himself with brandy, and, between ourselves, a good job too."

"Then she'll marry again, I'll bet; and I shouldn't wonder if the man would be that fellow who played Portia—Galton, I think they called him—What's that? I thought I heard somebody swearing."

John Meyrick drew in his head, and crouching down beneath the window-sill like a wild beast in its covert, heard their footsteps die away. Then he opened a door which communicated with his wife's bedroom, and looked in with wolfish eyes.

It was a chamber fitted up with the utmost luxury; and, but for the presence of the bed, might have been a drawing-room. Even the bed was a thing of beauty fit for rarest dreams; the coverlet of satin, and the pillows—"the widowed marriage pillows"—trimmed with exquisite lace. John Meyrick took one of these up in his hands and poised it; but presently laying it in its place again, climbed up on a velvet chair, and took down a bell-pull from its gilded hinge. It was a rope of twisted silk, slender, but very strong. In this he made a running noose, and took it with him into his own room.

As he passed by Eugenie's dressing-table, a letter stuck in the embroidered pincushion caught his eye; the contents of it were of no great importance, and were known to him; but he read them over again, and his features relaxed a little—just a very little—as he did so. The handwriting was that of Mrs. Meyrick senior. "Without mutual concessions, my dear Eugenie," she wrote, "married life can never be happy." "My poor boy has a good heart; &c. &c." Such efforts at

mediation were about as useful as sticking-plaster for healing the leak of a seventy-four; but the attempt exhibited in every line the undying love of the mother for her son.

John Meyrick placed the rope under his pillow, and again went out to the head of the stairs. All was quiet now, save that an airy bubble of laughter escaped ever and anon from the dining-room, where M. de Lernay and his friends were having their rere-supper. The watcher took off his shoes, and noiselessly descended to the drawing-room; the waxen lights in the brackets and chandeliers were fighting with the dawn that streamed in through many a cranny of the gilded shutters; but the brilliant company had all departed, nor was there anybody in the boudoir adjoining, where half-a-dozen flirtations had been proceeding so agreeably an hour before. The many mirrors reflected but one stealthy form, and a face ghastly pale, with the mouth worked into an evil smile. Did an echo of the cooing talk which had so lately been held there still linger about the *fauteuils* and conversation-chairs, or was

that a real voice which struck his ear? It was a real voice, and his wife's! She was talking to somebody in the conservatory beyond. He stole on to the window-mirror, and glued his white face to the glass. Yes, it was Eugenie. The sickly light of the Chinese lanterns that swung above was quenched in the full effulgence of the morning, which streamed upon her from an open window. Not half-a-dozen young women in all London would have dared to welcome Phoebus thus after a whole night's revel; but if she had just risen from her couch after refreshing sleep, or newly come, like Aphrodite, from the enamoured wave, she could not have looked more fresh and fair.

By her side was a young man in a strange dress and wig, but Meyrick recognised him at once—his foe and rival, Frederick Galton.

She was gathering a bouquet for him to take home to Mary in flowerless Somers Town.

"Stay, do not rob your green-house," returned Frederick; "let me have those in your own bouquet-holder."

*"Do not draw back your hand; I'll take no more,
And you in love shall not deny me this."*

"But these are fading," returned she.

"What matter for that? Their chief value will, I am sure, be held to be that you carried them all night."

"Then take the bouquet-holder, too," said she, "and with it my kindest love.—And now I must wish good-night to my father, and then——"

The spy had but just time to reach the drawing-room door, ere that of the boudoir opened. He flew upstairs with stockinged feet, and leaped into the bed he had lately quitted, and drew the clothes up to his ears; and there he lay, touching the silken rope beneath his pillow with his hand, to make sure it was there, and waiting—waiting.

Minute after minute went by, each minute an hour. His temples beat and throbbed as though they held a peal of bells within them, and the murderous fingers grew damp and clammy. Another wine-glass of

brandy for his parched and aching throat. At last there is a rustle of silk, and a weary, weary step toiling up the stairs. A thousand sparks seemed to fly before his tightly-closed eyes; that is because his brain is on fire; but he knows very well what is taking place; nay, more, what is going to happen. His wife is coming upstairs.

CHAPTER VII.

THE AFTER-SUPPER.

THE pleasantest part of an evening entertainment to host and hostess is perhaps, after the last carriage has been driven away with its complement of congratulating guests, to hear the comments of more intimate friends who may be staying in the house in corroboration of the fact, that the whole thing has gone off well. Each, as he takes up his candlestick to light him to his room, has kindly words to mingle with his "good-night," which cements the bond of friendship. One feels certain that he or she at least can never have sympathized with the ill-natured remarks of that horrid Sir Benjamin Backbite, or of that still worse Lady Sneerwell, towards whom our eye wandered so often during the evening in smiling hatred; while if any of

these charming personages express an inclination for just one more glass of champagne, how hospitably do we, the host, lead them down to the deserted supper-room, and how cheerful a half-hour is consumed while the ladies are undergoing the mysteries of retirement, or quite as probably chatting together in each other's apartments.

M. de Lernay had never been more brilliant, Mr. Jonathan Johnson had never spoken in such consecutive syllables, Mr. Percival Potts had never omitted for so lengthened a period to boast of his confounded family, as during the little after-supper which the Frenchman had proposed. The rest of the late actors shewed themselves fully equal to the situation; and when Eugenie, accompanied by Frederick Galton, came down to wish them all good-night, it was with one voice that they insisted upon their fair hostess—for whom Somebody was waiting so impatiently above stairs—taking her seat among them, if it were but for five minutes, and gracing their somewhat high-wrought revelry.

“ ‘Grant us two things,’ ”

quoath Bassanio, a common-law barrister in excellent practice, and as much given to fun as fees—

“ ‘Not to deny us, and to pardon us.’ ”

“ It is very late already, sir,” returned she smiling ;
“ and I am afraid your good wife, who left you here with reluctance, remember, will blame me for making you more dissipated than you are naturally inclined to be.”

“ ‘ We all have wives, whom we protest we love,’ ”

returned Gratiano, a newly married but by no means juvenile conveyancer, “ still, on such occasions as the present—

“ ‘ We wish they were in heaven.’ ”

“ These be the Christian husbands ! ” exclaimed Shylock laughing. “ I have a daughter ”—— Here his voice sank and quavered like a harp-string that has lost its tension.

“ It is well,” whispered Jonathan Johnson to his

next neighbour, "that De Lernay does not fif—fif—finish his quo—quo—quo, does not finish his quotation."

"Very true," returned Percival Potts: "the old fellow seems dreadfully conscious of having been about to put his foot in it. How odd and old he has begun to look: I suppose it's his beard. Shall I propose his health, and so get him out of his difficulty?"

There was a rattling of glasses and beating of fingers upon the table as the sub-editor rose.

"*Shylock*," commenced the Duke of Venice pompously—

" ' *The world thinks, and I think so too,
That thou dost lead the fashion of Mayfair
With most becoming grace,
That this fair feast,
Combining Thespis with Terpsichore,
Is worth much copy.* ' "

"Stop, stop," cried Frederick; "shame!"

" ' By which term I mean
No work for Printer's Devil, but Imitation;
More plays, more parties—with another Portia
Who doesn't interrupt—more pink champagne.

Like this, which now I, sober, dedicate

(*Impium*

Lenite clamorem, sodales, is

Not my hand as steady as the circulation of the

Porcupine!)

I, sober, dedicate to our good host.

Antonio, gratify this gentleman,

For in my mind you are much indebted to him,

(As we all are), by giving us the time

For cheering.' "

"I stut—stut—stutter so," said Mr. Johnson, suiting the action to the word.

"My dear fellow," whispered Frederick, "imagine you are about to say Hippopotamus, and you will give us the Hip, hip, hip to perfection. There, that's capital."

The fun was getting a little too boisterous, and Eugenie slipped out of the room while every face was turned towards her father. He sat quite still in his place without speaking, without moving his head while the cheering lasted, and even after it had died away. All were then silent, awaiting the brilliant speech that did not come.

"*We all expect a gentle answer, Jew,*" quoth Percival Potts.

"*Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew ears?*" began Bassanio, who sat next the host. Then all of a sudden his voice congealed with horror. "By Heaven, he is dying!" cried he. "He has had a fit or something. Run for a doctor—run!"

The guests leaped to their feet, and crowded round the unhappy Frenchman. His disguise and the general merriment had hitherto prevented any one from remarking what had happened; but to the affrighted eyes which now scanned him narrowly enough, it was evident that he had had some kind of stroke which paralysed half his features.

"Hush, be quiet," said Frederick gravely. "Let us get him to his own room, and, for Heaven's sake, keep his daughter from this sight."

"I am sure," replied Eugenie calmly, whom the cry of "Run, run for a doctor!" had reached on the very threshold of her own chamber, "I am sure I shall not be in the way; you may trust me, indeed you may, but

I must never be kept from him ; my place is henceforth by his bedside."

Every man was deeply moved and sorrow-stricken ; yet, as they carried him upstairs in his strange habit, speechless and motionless, it seemed almost like some hideous carnival procession making a mockery of death. Something of the sort seemed to strike Eugenie herself, for when the doctor had arrived, she declined, with thanks for their sympathy, all further aid. So the masqueraders went below, and resuming their ordinary garments, issued forth into the early morning air, thinking and talking of matters that were not very often present to the minds of any of them.

"His gibes, his songs, his flashes of merriment are done, poor fellow, I fear for ever," said Percival Potts as he linked his arm with that of Johnson. "This is an end to our evening's pleasure that might stagger the most philosophic ; young Galton seems half out of his mind with it. Let us ask the lad to walk with us a little way—he is scarcely fit to be left to his own company."

But Frederick declined to do so. "I shall go into the Park for a little fresh air," said he, "and try to shake off all this horror." It was too early for the gates to be opened, so he climbed over the railings, as he had done once before.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE VIGIL.

“O FATHER,” writes our greatest living poet,

“Wheresoe’er thou be
That pledgest now thy gallant son,
A shot, ere half thy draught be done,
Hath stilled the life that beat from thee.”

Even while the mother’s head is bowed in prayer that God will save her sailor-boy, his heavy-shotted hammock-shroud drops in his vast and wandering grave; and while the maiden decks her golden hair to please her expected lover—nay, at the very instant when, having left the glass, she turns to set a ringlet right, her future lord is drowned in passing through the ford, or killed in falling from his horse. There is fortunately no spiritual telegraph to communicate the coincidences of pleasure

and pain, of prosperity and wretchedness, of life and death, which are continually taking place among us, or we should be always in a state of feverish expectation. Even the frequent thought, "What is my dear boy doing now?" gives many a mother the heartache. In general, she distresses herself unnecessarily—for even boys are not, *at all times*, getting into scrapes—and feels securest at the very time when, to use his own forcible expression, the young gentleman is "coming his greatest cropper." Some weak-minded people, relying upon this fact, are always striving to anticipate calamities—"speculating for the fall," as they call it in the City—picturing to themselves the occurrence of every sort of calamity, under the impression that all evil will be evaded, just as other persons carry an umbrella in order to overrule the pluvial designs of Providence; but misfortune comes, and that suddenly, and whence the most sagacious looked not for it, as the thunder-cloud gathers and breaks in the loveliest autumn blue.

Little guesses Mary Galton, sitting in her lonely bedchamber in Somers Town, on the night that her

husband is playing in the stage-scene, what a terrible part he is enacting in the drama of real life.

She can imagine, and does so, although vaguely enough, the gay company and glittering rooms: the applause which he cannot fail to command, as he speaks this and that—for she has made up for her unfortunate mistake, and knows the whole *rôle* of Portia by this time as well as he does. But she does not, of course, dream of the sad conclusion of the supper-party, and far less of what is happening afterwards. She has not gone to bed, because she has got such great and glorious news to tell her darling Frederick, that she could not sleep a wink until she has disburdened her mind of the great tidings. He had scarcely left the house, in order to dine early in Park Lane, and take part in a dress rehearsal (for they did have one rehearsal after all, without which the knife for anatomising Antonio would, for one thing, have been clean forgotten), when a letter arrived for Mrs. Frederick Galton with the Casterton post-mark. "My dear Mary," it began; and ended with, "Your penitent uncle, Robert Morrit." It breathed throughout

a spirit of most generous self-reproach and affectionate conciliation, and inclosed a cheque for five hundred pounds. The curate was not a man to do anything, bad or good, by halves. There was to be no more poverty, no more estrangement—no more sorrow at all, as it seemed to Mary.

How tenderly she kissed her child as she laid him in his cot that evening, thanking Heaven that he at least would never know such troubles as those which had so lately threatened to overwhelm his parents. Then putting on her dressing-gown, she sat with the letter in her hand weaving the brightest future that her fancy could portray; but all its liveliest colours and all its choicest gilding were spent upon her husband, and for herself she kept the modest russet brown. She painted him rich, and powerful, and famous—for was he not wise, and great, and good enough already? She made him sought after and petted by the noblest in the land; she made him looked up to by the people; and yet, said she, he shall not love me less, nor be ashamed of his humble little wife. It was with a pardonable pride

that she saw herself received in Mr. Morrit's own house at Casterton—the invitation lay before her—and treated with becoming respect by good Aunt Hartopp, who had been wont to be a little hard with her. How charming would a visit be to the Round at Casterton with Frederick, and how they would recall the day when first they met there! She would ask him whether they repented of that meeting, standing on the self-same spot, and he would answer “No,” pressing his dear lips to hers. The cottage at Oldborough should be made bright with many a present, long thought of, but inaccessible heretofore, except to her wishes. Many a luxury should henceforth surround her mother; many a volume should swell the library of Sister Jane. She thought of Eugenie too, between whom and herself no gulf of inequality of fortune would for the future exist to keep their lives apart; how she pitied her, linked to that rude nature, so different from her own—for Mary had heard sad stories, while at Casterton, of its young squire, although she knew nothing of his late exploits. How thankful, thought she, ought herself to be, being such as she was,

to have secured so admirable a husband ; while Eugenie, so gently born, so accomplished, so divinely fair, had so unfortunately wedded. This was not a pharisaical reflection ; for she not only admired and owned the infinite superiority of her new friend, but entertained for her a genuine and affectionate esteem ; her honest heart no longer felt the least misgiving—the slightest taint of jealousy—but while she thought of Eugenie, her mind naturally reverted to Frederick, from whom, indeed, it never wandered far.

The night was now far advanced ; at the hour when the stage-scene was to be enacted, Mary had taken up the book, and made herself, as far as she could, a spectator of her husband's success ; but now the acting, must have long been over. He had said that there might be dancing afterwards ; but even so, now that the day was breaking, he must surely be home soon. Two o'clock—three o'clock ! Four ! Mrs. Gideon was a very early riser, and might herself be up and about soon. There was no harm, of course, in her husband's coming home at that time, or any time in the morning ;

but she did not want that woman to know it. The clock on the stairs struck five. Mary was now no longer apprehensive about Mrs. Gideon ; she trembled for the safety of her husband. What if he had met with some terrible accident—been run over—murdered, perhaps ? It was too terrible to think of. Such calamities were only to be found in novels. The sun was shining broad and fair, and the birds—for even in Somers Town there are many birds—were chirping and singing. Still, a pain lies within her—a something oppressive sits upon her brow and brain. She had kept watch too long, perhaps, and is worn out : that must be it. He is coming at last ; far away up the deserted street, she hears that well-known footfall. Why, then, does not her heart leap up like a bent sapling freed from the cruel cord ? She knows not why ; she only knows that it is tethered still. With trembling limbs, she approaches the window, which has been open all night, and cautiously peers forth. Yes, it is her husband ; but there is something strange about his appearance, that strikes her with vague dismay. As he comes quite

close, she perceives that his clothes are damp and shiny, and hang about him tightly; not a drop of rain has fallen through the night, and yet he is wet through. As he puts the latch-key noiselessly into the door, she catches for the first time a sight of his countenance, over which his hat has been slouched. Can that be her Frederick—the same bright, glorious being who left her but twelve hours ago, with a kiss and a smile? He looks as though he could never smile again. A face so pale, so haggard, so perplexed and terrified, she had never before seen—a face so terrible in its mute agony, that she feared to meet it; but throwing off the robe in which she had been sitting, she leaped into bed, and turning her eyes from the fierce light with a shudder, closed them in feigned sleep.

He was a long time coming up stairs; there was no noise except a certain “click, click,” for which she could not account; but not a step was audible. He came up with his shoes in his hand, and she heard him put them down very carefully upon the floor of his own little room. Before entering that apartment, no matter

what might be the hour of his return, it was his invariable custom to come into her room; she had entreated him to do so, protesting, even if it should awaken her, that the sleep which followed was always more refreshing after she had been assured of his being at home and in safety; but upon this occasion he made no such visit. He had never taken half the time to undress before. She heard the quick spurt of a match and then the crackling of sticks: what could he possibly want a fire for? Mrs. Gideon kept her fires laid even in June, because it did away with any necessity for grate ornaments; but she never intended them to be lit. The register was down, as Mary knew; but there was nothing for it but to lie still; he would soon find that out for himself. But a man does not soon find out the cause of even the most ordinary domestic mischance, and a good deal of—well—cursory language generally takes place on the part of a master of a house left to his own devices, before the plumber, or the glazier, or the chimney-sweep is sent for to put things to rights. Presently, Frederick opened his window,

being probably half-smothered, and then—yes, he was trying to put the register back with the poker. Poor clumsy Frederick! how Mary longed to help him; but then she did not dare. Something told her that he wished to be alone, and that she should not know of his presence in that room at all. And now there was a smell as of an indifferently conducted laundry establishment—the drying of very damp cloth garments. Why should he be so anxious to dry his own clothes, and at such an hour as that? What could he have been doing? What was the matter? She heard Mrs. Gideon knocking at the dressing-room door. “Was he a-settin’ her house on fire at that time in the morning?” was her sarcastic inquiry, as though, if he had only waited until a little later, arson would have been a very venial crime, if not a virtue.

“It’s all right,” returned Frederick. “I have got up to do some writing, Mrs. Gideon, and have cooked myself a cup of coffee—that’s all.” He did keep some excellent coffee in his dressing-room in a private locker, into which the larcenous landlady had not as yet been

able to penetrate, and also a coffee-pot, in order to save appearances ; but the coffee was only there for security, not for use. Mrs. Gideon appeared satisfied, although by no means pleased, with this reply ; but Mary shuddered at her husband's deliberate falsehood. She had never, to her own knowledge, heard him tell a lie before. What a voice he spoke with too !—thin, hollow tones, that strove in vain to be cheery ; they were like the echo of his usual speech, rather than the speech itself. A few minutes more, and he was in the bedroom. He trod softly to the window, and pulled the shutters together, which had not been closed all night. She was glad of that, for it placed her face in shadow ; still, when he came to the bedside, and stooped over her, to kiss her forehead as usual, she was afraid that her quick frightened breathing would betray that she was not asleep. Asleep ! If the letter beneath her pillow had been sufficient to keep her awake thus long with its little budget of good news, how much more wakeful did she feel when that letter and its contents had sunk to nothing in comparison with the vague

but intense terror that had seized upon her, and was shaking every limb! He did not, however, approach her, but lay down without a word; if she could have seen, she would have known that he did not even look towards her, but kept his eyes carefully averted; yet he well knew, by that inexplicable consciousness which possesses us on all like occasions, that the seeming sleeper was not asleep.

"I am afraid I woke you, Mary," said he presently.

"Yes, dear." She could not trust herself to say more.

"It is very late," he continued; "nearly four, I saw as I came upstairs."

He had been putting the clock back then, and more than an hour; that was the noise she had heard.

"What has happened, Frederick, love, to keep you so late?" She spoke wearily, and with her eyes closed, as though his answer did not much matter; but her heart beat for it tumultuously, and she feared lest she should not hear it when it came, such a singing was in her ears.

"Nothing, love," he said. Then, as if with a great effort of memory, he added: "Yes, something *has* happened; you may as well know it at once. Monsieur de Lernay has had a severe stroke of paralysis; it took place while he sat at the supper-table."

"Alas, alas!" said Mary; "God help him, poor man! How very, very shocking. What a terrible blow it will be for poor Eugenie! She will have nobody now to take her part. How did Mr. Meyrick"—

"Don't talk any more, Mary, just now," interrupted Frederick hurriedly, almost harshly—"don't do it. I want rest, rest, rest!"

His gaunt and hollow features gave ample witness that therein he was telling the truth. But although his eyes were firmly closed, and his body remained motionless as that of a dead man, no rest came to Frederick Galton's brain, neither then nor for many a night to come.

CHAPTER IX.

KIND INQUIRIES.

ALL next day, Frederick kept within doors, on the plea of illness. Yet he rose even before his usual hour; and when the maid-of-all-work came to "do" his room, she found no trace of drying clothes or anything unusual. But he spoke and moved like one in a lethargy. He seemed to take a second or two to comprehend even the most ordinary remark that was addressed to him, and if unaddressed, he looked unconscious of what was passing about him. When Mary, with beaming face, communicated to him at breakfast-time the glad tidings from Casterton, he received them like a piece of foreign intelligence in the *Times*, which, no matter how large letters it may be printed in, does not much disturb our private mind.

"That is good news indeed," said he, wringing his words out one by one; "excellent news. Dear Mary, I am so glad, for your sake."

He let her rise and put her arms about his neck, but he did not return her caress, and appeared but little more conscious of it than a statue that is being garlanded with flowers. Then a sudden suspicion smote through Mary's breast like an arrow sharp and barbed—Frederick had become unfaithful to her; he had at last met with that Somebody against whom they used to warn her—some accomplished, brilliant beauty, worthy of his choice—and cared for his lowly, ignorant wife no longer.

"Glad of it for *my* sake!" said she piteously; "and why not for your own? Are we not one, Frederick, bound up together for life? Does not joy alight on us at the same moment? Would not sorrow or shame strike us through with the same blow?"

Frederick shuddered. "Sorrow," said he, "but not shame, wife. If I did some terrible and heinous act, you would be sorry, Mary—very sorry, I know—you

might even blush for me ; but it would not be for you, whose soul is unspotted, to feel the sting of shame."

Her suspicion, then, was too true ; but at all events he saw his error ; he was sorry ; every syllable told her that he repented having done her wrong.

"Husband," returned she, "dear husband, I do not know what weight is on your mind : I do not seek to know. But, be assured, no matter what it is, that my great love would help to bear it up. If—if" (here she knelt down by his chair) "I had anything to forgive you, Frederick, would I not do so, think you?"

"Yes, Mary," (he did not take his hand away when she strove to fondle it, but his fingers gave no answering clasp or touch), "I do believe you would : you are not a woman, but an angel—altogether too good for me, Mary. Most women's sins are rose-pink ; most men's, scarlet ; but the wickedest thought that you ever entertained is Virtue's self compared to what my brain breeds."

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," murmured the woman with shut eyes ; "and

forgive us our trespasses." Never had man more loving beadswoman, or fairer intercessor, than had Frederick Galton in Mary his wife.

"But suppose the evil has been done," returned he, in hollow tones—"has been done, and is irrevocable"—

"Repent, repent," mournfully interrupted she, "and avoid it for the future."

"I knew it," muttered Frederick bitterly; "how could it be otherwise?—But, Mary, dear, suppose it were not a thing to do again—not some such sin as you are thinking of, but a crime"—

"Then make reparation to the utmost, and ask forgiveness of God."

Frederick groaned, and hid his face.

"Husband, dear, let us pray. If there is any sin upon your soul, I pray God to let me share it, if I may thereby share the punishment."

"Heaven forbid!" murmured Frederick earnestly. "But let us talk no more in this fashion. There is no weight such as you imagine oppressing me; I am unwell, Mary, that is all. When the body is sick, the

heart is faint. I feel morbid, depressed, and haunted with the sense of woe impending, but what has really fallen is only good fortune. How unthankful I must seem to you!—Where is my uncle's letter? Let me read it once again."

"Do, darling, do. Is he not kind? Is he not sorry for the past? Do you not forgive him all? You will write to him to-day, Frederick, will you not? Or shall *I* write? Perhaps that would be better."

"Much better, Mary."

"But I shall be so frightened, and I know there will be all sorts of mistakes, love. So you must read it over, please, before it goes. You couldn't write me out what I should say, could you, Frederick? Just a few words for me to copy. No, you're not well enough for that. You have actually not touched one morsel this morning. Dear husband, I think I know what it is which makes you so sad. You are thinking of poor Eugenie."

"Yes, I was; that is it," returned Frederick mechanically.

"Poor girl—poor dear girl," murmured Mary. "Heaven knows how I pity her. Don't you think, love, since you are so unwell, that I had better go to Park Lane myself, to see her in this trouble? Would she not think it kind?"

"No—no—no," answered Frederick vehemently; "you must not go near that house; you would do more harm than good.—Hush! what is that man crying in the street? What a noise he makes with his lying news!"

"*Second edition of this morning's papers! Mysterious and horrible death of a gentleman of fortune in the Serpentine water in Hyde Park. Suspected murder of a gentleman of fortune!*"

Through the open window, every syllable the newsman bawled and bawled again was heard with distinctness. Nearer and nearer he drew, till at last he stood exactly opposite the area railings, and proffered his wares in his natural voice across them. "Second edition, sir; great news, my lady, this morning. A gentleman of fashion found drowned in the Serpentine;

here it is, with the latest particulars. You will seldom find a better sixpennyworth than this, I assure you; only sixpence."

"Here is the money, man; go!" cried Frederick furiously. "No, I don't want your paper; it's all lies."

"But this is true, sir," returned the newsman confidentially. "I know a party myself who is brother-in-law to the party as found the unfortunate victim; quite a young gentleman he was, and there seems to be little doubt that there was some foul"—

Frederick slammed the window down, and pulled the blind over it in the man's face. "These sort of fellows will never take a civil answer," cried he. "What were we talking of, when that brute first interrupted us?"

"*Murder* or *suicide*," screamed the human parrot with redoubled energy, after the refreshment of subdued conversation—"suspected *murder* of a *gentleman of fortune*!"

"We were talking of Eugenie," said Mary. "I trust that her husband will be kind, and comfort her in this

great sorrow. I think if one of us does not go, we certainly ought to send to inquire after her father."

"Just as you please, Mary; perhaps you had better go yourself. The servant will be sure to bring back some garbled report. You will have a cab, of course—there is no more necessity for close economy, you know—and you had better take your nurse and child."

"If you wish it, Frederick, I will do so; though I should not come to any hurt, alone. I hope, however, that Mr. John Meyrick will not be in the house; I have a sort of horror of that man."

To look at Frederick's face, it seemed as though he had a sort of horror of him too.

"He will not harm you," said he gravely, after a little pause; "and since you have determined upon going, it will be just as well to go at once. I shall be anxious—very anxious to hear your news."

It is a long journey from Somers Town to Park Lane, even if the wayfarer is not dependent upon a chain of omnibuses, by no means "in correspondence," but indulges in the luxury of a "through transit" per cab.

Considering that Frederick must have known this very well, he grew most unjustifiably impatient for his wife's return. He began to pull out his watch, and stare through the window before she could well have reached the place of her destination. He lit cigar after cigar, and before he had smoked them half way through, tossed them into the grate, and commenced walking restlessly up and down the room, like an hyena. Curiously enough, when the time grew near when she might be reasonably expected, he left the parlour, and retired to his dressing-room, which was at the back of the house. There he sat at the open window, gazing vacantly at the bare strips of garden-ground in which there were no flowers, and wherein the only trees were clothes-props; but his ears drank in the slightest sound from within the house. When the front-door bell rang at last, he sat himself swiftly down at his writing-table, and made as though he were busy with some manuscript. He heard his wife enter the house, and look into the sitting-room, and come upstairs with hurried steps. He knew that she

was outside his door, and hesitating there before she knocked.

"Come in, dear," answered he with composure; "I hope you bring good news. How *is* the poor old man? Has he recovered his speech at all? How is Eugenie?" He rained these inquiries upon his wife with great rapidity, like sentences out of a phrase-book, but he never took his eyes off the page before him.

"Monsieur de Lernay is somewhat better; I don't know whether he can speak or not; but, O Frederick, I know you will be so shocked—for though you didn't like him, as, indeed, nobody could, yet, for the sake of Auld Lang Syne, you must needs be sorry—Mr. Meyrick has killed himself!"

"Gracious goodness!" exclaimed Frederick, looking up for an instant at his wife's face. "What! at Casterton? at the Grange?"

"I am not speaking of the old Squire, Frederick: it is John Meyrick himself, I mean; your own old play-mate, years ago. I knew you would be touched."

"Is he dead?" asked Frederick, keeping his hand

over his eyes. "This is truly horrible. Quite dead—you are sure?"

"Alas! yes; there is no doubt of that. He was brought home this morning dead and drowned. He it doubtless was of whom the newspaper man was telling us. There is quite a crowd about the house."

"And Eugenie? how does she bear this second misfortune?"

"She is wonderful—wonderful!" returned Mary. "Even if John Meyrick was ever so bad a man, of course, she cannot but feel such a sudden blow as this. She does feel it I am sure. Yet, with her father speechless, and perhaps dying in one room, and her husband a corpse in another, she is quite collected and firm. I shall never forget her face, as she told me what had happened. Instead of being at the party last night, he had remained in his own room, it seems; and fancy, Frederick! he had not been sober for hours. Is not that terrible?"

"Go on, go on."

"Well, they suppose that he took to drinking afresh

—for there was an emptied brandy-bottle by his bedside—and so brought on a fit of delirium. Then he began to think of suicide. Under his pillow was found a bell-rope, taken out of his wife's room—poor Eugenie shuddered when she said '*my* room'—with a slip-knot made in it. But his courage seems to have failed him with respect to that mode of death. He left the house unobserved, when everybody was engaged about poor Monsieur de Lernay, and wandered into Hyde Park, and to the Serpentine. He was determined enough then, poor wretch ; he was found drowned in quite shallow water, close to the bank."

"Close to the bank," repeated Frederick mechanically, "yet under water?"

"Just so ; and with his blank face upward—not downward. That is the only thing which throws a doubt about its being an act of suicide. Of course, it was terrible for Eugenie to have to tell all this ; but she said she would rather do so, once for all, and that I must never ask her about it again. She enjoined me to be sure and repeat to you, word for word, all that she

told me. He had his card-case with him, so the body was brought home at once from the Royal Humane Society's offices ; but he was so altered that the servants hardly knew him. The inquest, they say, will be held on Wednesday. Oh, there was one thing more which brought the tears into my eyes ; he had taken with him his wife's bouquet-holder—the very one which you saw in her hand last evening—and it was found lying by the dead man's side, with the flowers still in it. 'Tell your husband *that*, as well as the rest,' said Eugenie. Perhaps she thought it might win a better place for the unhappy man in your memory, for she mentioned it twice, and bade me not forget it.—How pale and faint you look, love ! I told her that your kind heart would bleed for her. Sad as our talk was, I am truly glad I went."

"Yes, it was well," said the young man musing ; "and now, dearest, leave me here alone a little. This fatal news has unnerved me. I shall feel better left to myself."

Once more he placed himself by the open window,

loosening his cravat at the same time, and gazed upon the waste of brick and mortar. As the refrain of some foolish song, or as some witless jest, will sometimes haunt the mind for years, so did that dusty, mean, and almost squalid picture before Frederick's unregarding eyes become engraved for aye upon his memory : for in the fiery ordeals of the soul, all circumstances, however trivial, whether of person, place, or thing, partake for the future of those dread epochs, and are lifted henceforth from their natural level, while the brain, unconscious as a camera, takes in, at such times, impressions of all that surrounds us upon its indelible plate.

CHAPTER X.

AN INTERESTING EVENT.

WHEN an editor makes public boast of the importance of his journal, he dwells upon the various degrees of men who purchase or read it, and of the out-of-the-way and distant parts of the world to which it penetrates; but a much more striking subject for reflection upon the wonders of the press is the enthralling personal interest with which every copy of a great newspaper must be received and devoured. The advertisement-sheet alone—independently of those momentous intimations in its second column of forgiveness or renunciation of the Prodigal, the farewell or return of the Wronged, the passionate last appeal to the Destroyer, each of which is a romance of real life compressed into a few lines—the advertisements alone,

I say, bear hope and disappointment, comfort or despair, to hundreds, although to the tens of thousands they may seem only stupid puffs or artful swindles.

The births are ruin to the heir-presumptive; the marriages are wormwood to the jilted; the deaths, which we read so glibly, fill scores of hearts with unutterable woe.

Darkest of all to a few is that page which contains the annals of crime. From it, the poor wretch, who has hidden, as he hopes, his fraud so cunningly that no man shall unravel it, learns for the first time that all his pains have been unavailing, and that the clue is in the hands of those who will follow it up to the bitter end; the forger peruses the history of his own act, writ by no lenient hand; the murderer listens aghast to the first whisper of a voice that he deemed was stifled, but which, as he now well perceives, shall presently grow to a great cry of blood for blood.

Among the most exciting and sensational of newspaper topics, at the time of which we speak, were the rumours and suspicions incident to the death of John

Meyrick. His wealth, which of course was greatly exaggerated; the position in society which M. de Lernay had endeavoured, and, to a certain extent, had succeeded in securing for him; his youth, thus suddenly cut off in the midst, it was whispered, of terrible dissipations; the beauty and accomplishments of Eugenie, already well-nigh overwhelmed by the misfortune that had overtaken her father upon the same night on which she had become a widow—all these things were elements enough of wonder and curiosity. But in addition to what was ascertainable, there were the strangest rumours afloat, which, drifting hither and thither in all directions, clung like fireships to the unwieldy vessel, Public Opinion, and set it alight from stem to stern. Mr. John Meyrick had half murdered M. de Lernay, and then killed himself; he had attempted to destroy his wife, who was only preserved from his brutal violence at the expense of the life of her father; mad with drink, he had devised a scheme for the annihilation of two hundred persons of fashion at a dramatic entertainment, and in despair at

its failure, this amateur Guy Faux had put an end to his own existence. Nor were there wanting sensation paragraphs, which took what might be called the other side of the question, and represented the dead man as a victim; and it was curious to mark how the poor half-penny-worth of fact was almost always present amid the most monstrous falsehoods. The Frenchman and his daughter, it was said, had ruled the unhappy deceased, who was of weak mind, with a rod of iron; his refusal to comply with some humiliating request of his father-in-law, had driven the latter gentleman into an apoplectic fit, through violent passion; at which calamity, the poor young man—who had in reality a good heart—was so horror-stricken, that he sought refuge in a watery grave. Nay, there were even statements that John Meyrick had not committed suicide at all, but had come to his death by violence. Some of his relatives had only too good reasons to wish for his decease. So estranged had he been from his own family, that although actually in the house upon that festive occasion which had terminated so tragically,

he had never left his bedroom, except to take a walk in the Park when all was over. He was partial, it seemed, to a quiet life, while his wife—a Frenchwoman and a Catholic—and her father, who resided with them, were given up to fashionable frivolities. The paragraph writers were not, they said, at present at liberty to say more, but the public need not be surprised if jealousy was found to have been at the bottom of this truly mysterious affair. Every device, in short, for inflaming curiosity was put in practice, and not the least effective was the pretence of judicial forbearance, with which, when they had told all they knew, and all that they could invent, the writers concluded their remarks: “We abstain, for obvious reasons, from dwelling upon this painful subject further; but we are in a position to state, that at the inquest to be held on Wednesday next there will be revelations of a most unexpected kind.”

Conceive with what more or less of interest all these reports were read or listened to by the principal personages in this history. We know, from the most trust-

worthy authorities, how difficult it is for even the chivalrous hero of a novel to shut his ears when he suddenly finds himself the topic of conversation among strangers; his curiosity is too strong for his sense of honour, and not until he has overheard the most striking of the observations in question, and the speakers show signs of beginning to tire of the subject, and to change it for something else, is he compelled, by the natural frankness of his disposition, to reveal himself, to their astonishment and confusion. This, of course, puts an end to the scandal. But when people talk about our personal friends, and in the newspapers, it is impossible to stop them, even if we felt inclined to do so; and since it can do no additional harm to read what is so widely disseminated, we ourselves (and not altogether without interest) peruse it, like the rest of the world.

At all events, an inquest is a judicial proceeding which it is only right that everybody should make themselves acquainted with, and if it happen to be held upon the body of a personal acquaintance—well, that is

very shocking, of course, but it does not detract from its exciting character.

The delicate Mr. Chester's principal objection to self-destruction was, that it subjected even persons of distinction to be "sat upon" by coroners, and "viewed" by jurors, and Mr. Percival Potts was a disciple of the same school. The political organ over which he presided, no longer as sub, but as sole-editor, without at all disdaining to improve its circulation by exciting paragraphs about the mysterious decease of the gentleman of fashion in Hyde Park, was eloquent in its leaders against the mischievous notoriety of coroners' inquests; the unnecessary prying of the public eye into the affairs of distinguished families, at a time when grief ought to be held most sacred; and the mingling of vulgar conventionalisms with the solemnities of death. Among people in Whitechapel, coroners' inquests might be well enough, and even afford a balm to the feelings of surviving relatives; but among persons of condition, they should never be held, unless under circumstances of great suspicion, since they only

added shame to sorrow. To these cogent remarks, interspersed with Latin quotations, a little marred by the printer, the *Daily Democrat* responded, that it was only among the higher classes that there was any necessity for coroners' inquests at all; that in Belgrave Square more people came by their deaths unfairly, and generally at the hands of their immediate heirs, than in any area of similar extent in the whole of London, no matter how densely populated. Descending from general abuse of Society to special libel, the article concluded with a reference to certain attempts which were being made by some portions of the press to burke inquiry into the circumstances attendant upon the death of John Meyrick, Esq.

This pretty newspaper quarrel did not diminish the general excitement; and the appointed Wednesday was looked for with more anxiety than most days which have given promise of their favourite food to a mystery-loving public. It came at last, as all days come, no matter how lingering is their approach, how dark their dawn, how big with woeful fate to the human watcher.

The inquest was held at noon, and did not conclude till four. At six, Frederick Galton held in his hand a copy of the *Unicorn*, containing the full particulars, and forwarded to him anonymously by special messenger. On plea of continued illness, he had never left his house since the night of the dramatic performance. Mr. Jonathan Johnson had called, but he had been too unwell to see him; too unwell to eat or drink, too unwell to sleep, too unwell to speak, beyond a few commonplace observations to his wife; too unwell for any company but his own. Mrs. Gideon had remarked to Mary, with whom she now endeavoured to establish confidential relations, that her husband really seemed to be "queerer" than ever. "I used to think him rather a fast young man—I did indeed, ma'am, for I will not deceive you—but I am now convinced that it was all his queerness. Martha is quite of my opinion, and indeed *she* thinks he is downright wrong in his head."

Mary repeated this to Frederick, in order to make him laugh, to rouse him, if it were but for a moment,

from the morbid melancholy in which he seemed to be plunged, and at the same time to draw his attention indirectly to the strangeness of his behaviour; perhaps, he might thereby be induced to send for a doctor, which he had somewhat vehemently refused to do. He did not, indeed, laugh at Mrs. Gideon's opinion of him, but it seemed to awaken some faint interest within him.

"She always thought I was queer, did she?" said he smiling.

"Yes, she did indeed, Frederick; and as for Martha, it seems she always thought you cracked."

"Cracked, eh? How funny!" Frederick smiled again.

Mary, delighted to see him thus won a little from himself, pursued the subject.

"And the fact is, my dear love, that many other persons entertain the very same idea about you. You don't know what odd things you do. That was actually one of the objections urged against our marriage by more than one person I could name; they said you were so flighty. Commonplace people don't understand you—

I should never have understood you, of course, myself, if it had not been that Love played the interpreter. Although you are so clever, and I am so dull, I know you, Frederick dear—ah! better than all the world beside.”

“But others think I’m mad, do they, Mary?” He was looking straight before him into the empty grate, and not, as of old, at her, but still it was something that he could be got to talk at all.

“Well, they would scarcely dare to say that you were mad, Frederick; but if you ever happened to do anything very extraordinary and out of the way, I do believe that they would say there was no wonder, and that they had always expected something of that sort.”

“You really think they would say that?” said Frederick rousing himself.

“I am sure they would,” answered Mary laughing. “Why, my dear, dear Fred., you don’t know how funnily you behave sometimes. If I was not your wife—and more than that, as I have said, a very

loving one—I, too, should now and then believe that you were not quite—you won't be angry, love—not quite in your right mind."

Frederick was not angry ; far from it ; he had, on the contrary, seemed to be in rather better spirits on the day after this conversation, which took place at breakfast-time, upon the morning on which the inquest was to be held ; but he retired in the afternoon as usual to his own room. It was thither that the extra edition of the *Unicorn* had been carried to him ; and there he sat, alone, with the unopened newspaper in his hand, gazing upon it with a curious fascination. When beginning authorship, he had experienced something of the same kind with respect to some journal which he had reason to know contained a critique upon his poems—of the same kind, but how fearfully different in degree. Such might have made his heart go pit-a-pat, for the circulation of a young author's blood is more easily hastened than that of his book, but it would never have brought the drops of sweat upon his forehead, as now. Had he been a *clairvoyant*, and

been able to possess himself of all that lay hid in that little roll of print, at a single glance, what long minutes of agony would he have been spared ! Even when he had undone the paper, he shrank from looking at the very place where he knew that what he sought was to be found. He ran his eye over the *Court Circular*, over the *Money Article*, over the *Amusements*—how strange it seemed to him that people should enjoy concerts, theatres, casinos, Shakspeare readings—ay, by the by, how was poor Shylock by this time ? “ Hopelessly ill,” was the last news that had been heard of him. Eugenie had returned no other answer the second time he had sent to inquire after M. de Lernay. There was nothing more to say to him (Frederick) after that message about the bouquet-holder. She would judge him leniently—there was no doubt of that ; but henceforth, no communication would ever pass between her and him.

How strange it seemed, when only a few days ago she had greeted him so warmly, and spoke of Mary with such tenderness, and made such plans for friend-

ship for the future! How a single act changes the whole course of our being; how a hasty word, a moment's evil impulse, leads to immediate ruin! The path of Life skirts always an unseen precipice, and where the flowers grow most luxuriantly, and tempt the wayfarer, is often the most dangerous spot; we tread on roses into the abyss. *The inquest upon Mr. Meyrick.* His eye was upon it at last; he could avoid the huge black staring type no longer. Two, three, four, five columns long, and the Verdict over the page. The Verdict! He felt himself growing ghastly pale. His heart seemed to stop suddenly, like a hitched pendulum. As a debauched novel-reader, whom nothing can interest short of *dénouements*, feels a desire to plunge into, to begin with, the conclusion of the third volume, so Frederick yearned to know the end of the whole matter, but did not dare to inform himself. He preferred to gather what might be coming from what had gone before. The shadow would doubtless project itself dark and defined enough for him to guess at the form of that which threw it. He would let the

evidence tell upon his own mind as though he were a juryman. What has Park-keeper No. 1 to say about this mysterious affair, which, it is written, has "thrown the west end of the metropolis into a state of such intense excitement," and caused the jury-room to be "crowded to suffocation by persons of the highest fashion?"

Park-keeper No. 1 has not much to say, and seems to have a difficulty in saying that little; his evidence is a collection of short answers in reply to elaborate but not very logical questions, and reads like a conversation-page out of one of M. Dumas's later *feuilletons*. What it all comes to, however, is this. "Being upon duty on the night of the eighteenth of June in question, he perceived, an hour or so after daybreak, but before the Park gates were opened, a dark object floating at the north-east corner of the Serpentine. Leastways, it was not floating, but only appeared to do so in the distance. As he neared it, he found it to be a human body, lying face upward in shallow water. The water covered the face perhaps a couple of inches

deep. It was the body of a young gentleman—he had seen it again to-day, and it was the same body. It was dressed in fine black clothes—what were evening clothes, he dared say ; but wearing a uniform himself both day and night, he was no great judge of that matter. It wore a heavy gold chain, and in the shirt front were diamond studs. It was lying with the face upward, and quite dead. The face was slightly discoloured, and the eyelids in particular almost black. There was no mark or sign of violence whatever upon the body, so far as he could see. He had seen a good many ; yes, more than a dozen—more than a score, he should say—of drowned persons in the Royal Humane at one time or another, and they all looked like that. He could not account for the face being upward, unless the party had turned himself round. He did not think that was likely to happen after death ; declined to say that it was impossible to happen. Was only there to say what he knew, and did not wish to communicate his speculations ; just so. Called assistance, and helped to convey the body into the Royal Humane. Did not

wait to see it stripped, being well aware that the time had long elapsed in which resuscitation could be hoped for. The body was stiff and cold. Saw nobody in the neighbourhood of the spot; nor previous to discovering the corpse, had heard any noise or outcry. Had there been any such within a quarter of an hour of the time he reached the place, he must have heard it."

This evidence was more or less corroborated by three persons who had assisted the last witness to remove the body.

Then came the medical witness, Mr. Amphib, one of the assistant-surgeons to the Royal Humane Society.

"Had examined the deceased immediately upon his having been brought in from the water. There was no sign of life whatever. The usual means for resuscitation were employed, but were totally unavailing. It was very unusual to resuscitate a body after an immersion of five minutes, although by no means unexampled. An authentic case was even reported of resuscitation after twenty minutes; no chance of life was ever thrown away, and what could be done was done in this

case. His own opinion was that the deceased had been immersed at least twenty minutes. There was every sign of death by drowning. The skin was cold, pale, and contracted, the face and neck were covered with livid patches, the expression of the countenance calm and peaceful; the eyes were half open, and the pupils much dilated. The mouth was closed, and the teeth tightly set. This last symptom was rather unusual. It might have been caused by the determination of the suicide. If the deceased had committed suicide, he must have been very determined, according to the preceding evidence. Persons had, however, drowned themselves, within his personal knowledge, in water equally shallow. All the symptoms of death by drowning would be precisely the same whether the water were deep or shallow, even if it covered the mouth only by a few inches. Only, under the latter circumstances, there would probably be but little water found in the stomach. In the present case, he found but very little. There was as much brandy as there was water. (Sensation.) If exceedingly intoxicated, a man would of

course be more likely to be accidentally drowned if he fell even in shallow water, than if sober. He could not say, from the *post-mortem* examination, whether the deceased had died in a state of intoxication or otherwise: certainly not. He did not attach any great importance to the fact that the body had been found upon its back with the face upwards; the probability of suicide would doubtless have been greatly diminished by such a circumstance, had the face not been immersed. There were no signs whatever to excite the suspicion that the deceased had been foully dealt with, except the lividity of the neck; it was unusually discoloured, and more so than the face itself. Bruises of considerable extent are often seen upon the drowned, when the body has been floating loosely in water, which may be the result of accidents to which it has been exposed in that position; but in still and shallow water, there should be no bruises. The spots upon the neck of the deceased might by possibility be finger-marks: that idea had undoubtedly occurred to him. The marks he alluded to were slight ecchymosed

depressions, upon either side of the neck, such as would be caused by digital pressure. He was not prepared to say that they must needs be finger-marks. In several cases, there had even been found a deep ecchymosed circle round the neck of a drowned person, such as to raise the strongest suspicion of foul play; yet in one instance it was discovered that the deceased had made a previous attempt to commit suicide by hanging; and in another, the mark had been produced by the pressure of the string of his cloak, which the tide had drifted to the opposite direction from that of the boat to which he was struggling. A practitioner must needs, therefore, be cautious in giving a decided opinion, founded on such appearances, as to whether an act of drowning was the result of accident, suicide, or murder. That was a matter for the jury to decide, and not for him. He had been asked his private opinion since the occurrence had taken place, and he had given it; yes, pretty decidedly. He had said that the deceased had come to his end by suicide. A person in a state of such intoxication as might be produced

by the brandy found in the stomach of the deceased, could, however, in his opinion have drowned himself, by accident, in very little water: he had known an instance of a drunkard meeting his death by falling with his face in a mere puddle. In that case, the man was not found with his face upward—true. He had no further evidence to offer.”

John Edmund Freke, valet to the deceased, deposed: “He identified the body of his master, John Meyrick, Esquire, Junior. It was brought home upon the morning of the nineteenth of June, about eight o’clock, dead and drowned. He had seen him leave the house about five hours before, after a great party which had been held there. He had left it soon after M. de Lernay, his father-in-law, had been taken with the fit, and immediately after some of the guests—some as had stayed to help to carry that gentleman upstairs, and such like—had gone away. Mr. Meyrick had taken no notice of his father-in-law’s misfortune; none whatever. They had not been on good terms. Mr. Meyrick was to blame, as far as he knew. He would often use

dreadful language towards M. de Lernay, when speaking of him to witness. He would do so both drunk and sober. But he was almost always drunk. He should say he was naturally of a melancholy disposition: he never seemed to enjoy himself much, not even in his cups. On the morning of the eighteenth of June, he had been brought home drunk, after having been out all night, and he, witness, had put him to bed in the dressing-room. He had done so more than once before. He did observe something peculiar in his behaviour upon that occasion, which he had not observed at any previous time. He was particularly wild in his talk and manner; he would without doubt have been dangerous, if he had not been so entirely prostrated by liquor. He seemed to be muttering threats—so far as anything could be made out at all of what he said—but whether against himself or others, witness could not say. His own impression was that the deceased was upon the verge of an attack of the horrors: yes, he meant of delirium tremens. Deceased had remained upstairs all the ensuing day,

refusing the food that was brought to him, but taking quantities of drink. He had nearly emptied a large bottle of brandy that stood in his dressing-room. He never came down stairs at all, to his (witness's) knowledge, until all the company had gone, even those who had stayed to sup with M. de Lernay. He left the house quite alone. Nobody attempted to stop him. Nobody but M. de Lernay would have dared to do such a thing. Witness saw him passing through the hall, looking very wild and haggard. He was in evening dress. After leaving the house, he turned southward down Park Lane, and towards Piccadilly; he walked very fast. He did not cross to the Park side of the road."

Clara Roberts, upper housemaid in the establishment of the deceased, deposed: "She made the dressing-room bed as usual upon the morning of June nineteenth, and under the pillow found a rope coiled up, with a slip-knot at one end of it. It was one of the bell-ropes from her mistress's room. There was no such rope in the dressing-room; the bells there had handles to

them, and no ropes. It was not at all unusual for the deceased to pass the night in his dressing-room. The brandy bottle kept in the cabinet by the bedside was nearly empty. It was quite full on the evening of the seventeenth; it was refilled on that day by the last witness. Her master was accustomed to drink much more than was good for him. Did not see him at all during the last six-and-thirty hours of his life, but understood that he had been brought home on the morning of the eighteenth, in a worse state than usual."

Police constable X. 490 deposed: "Was called by a park-keeper, the first witness, to assist in removing the deceased from the Serpentine to the Royal Humane Society's establishment. Returned immediately afterwards to the spot where the body was found. Within a few feet of that place, and partially covered with water, we picked up a gilt bouquet-holder [produced] filled with flowers. There were no marks of struggling, or anything whatever that betokened an encounter about the spot."

Clara Roberts recalled: "Identified the bouquet-holder as belonging to her mistress, Mrs. John Meyrick. She had used it upon the night of the party on the eighteenth. The flowers, to the best of her belief, were the same flowers."

John Edmund Freke recalled: "Could not swear whether the deceased had a bouquet-holder in his hand when he left the house or not; should not have been surprised, or taken any particular notice if he had; should not have been surprised at anything."

The appearance of the next witness, said the newspaper report, caused intense excitement, it being understood that his evidence had not been forthcoming until that very afternoon. He was clothed in filthy rags, held together by a little string; his face was scarred with disease, and dreadfully emaciated; and his appearance altogether denoted the extremity of poverty and wretchedness. He gave his name as John Raun. "Was by trade a weaver, but had been out of work for several months. Had had no home or lodging of any kind for weeks; no, nor a good meal since the Derby

Day, when some gentlemen had given him some chicken and lobster, and what not, out of their drag. Had slept in one or other of the Parks most nights lately, unless when it was wet, when he had used the Adelphi Arches. Was sleeping in Hyde Park on the night of the eighteenth of June, under a big tree, not far from the north-eastern end of the water. Did not sleep well because of pains in the joints, to which he was subject, and woke very often. Was awakened about daybreak on the morning of the nineteenth, and could not go to sleep again. About an hour after that time, or perhaps more, he couldn't say for certain—the clock might have struck once or twice—he saw a young gentleman coming towards the water from the direction of Park Lane. He was dressed in fine clothes, and he had that gilt thing in his hand with flowers in it, which had been shown to witness. He smelled the flowers as he came along, walking very slowly. Had seen the body of the deceased; it was not he as came along by the water first: witness could swear to that. (Sensation.) His attention was called to the young

gentleman because he recognised him as having been one of those who gave him the nice food he had spoken of on Epsom Downs. He had been particular kind to him, and emptied half a pie and some salad into his hat. Of course, therefore, witness knowed him again very well, and took especial notice. Witness kept himself out of sight behind the tree, but intended presently to come out and beg something. Before the young man got off the green, but when he was close to the roadway, witness saw another gentleman, the deceased, walking very swiftly after him."

Here Frederick Galton put down the newspaper, and sat for a little looking straight before him, with his left hand pressed to his side. Then going to the wash-hand stand, he plunged his face and forehead in cold water, and then, without using the towel, re-seated himself with dripping hair close to the open window, and read on.

"Deceased overtook the first gentleman just as he reached the water's side, and seized him by the collar of his coat. They spoke to one another very fierce

indeed ; witness could hear that, although he could not hear what was said. He saw the deceased point angrily at something—it seemed to be at the gold thing which held the flowers—and strike the other in the face. Then they grappled together on the edge of the water and fell into it, and fought and struggled, half in and half out of it, sometimes one atop, and sometimes the other ; but at last deceased fell undermost altogether, and could not rise again. Then the first young gentleman got up, and shook himself free of the other, and ran off towards the Marble Arch ; and witness ran off too among the trees, lest he should get himself into trouble. He had not interfered because it was no concern of his ; and also because the gentleman who had given him the food at Epsom seemed to have the best of it all along. It was deceased who attacked the other, and not the other deceased ; he had seized him by the collar, and struck him in the face ; no blow had passed before that, witness was quite sure. Could not say whether deceased was dead or not when the gentleman left him, but thought not ; the latter seemed to

have a difficulty in getting away—in releasing himself from the hold of him who was undermost. He did not kneel upon deceased at all, but had his fingers on his throat, as the other had on his. He ran off like one who was terrified at what had been done; his clothes were very wet, of course. Certainly, witness would know him again anywhere, as he knew him then; it was not every gentleman as gave one salad and pie. The reason why he had not given any information to the police until that day was, as he had said before, that he was afraid of getting into trouble himself; and also because he did not want to get the gentleman who had been so kind to him into trouble. He (witness) had confided the whole matter, just as he had now related it, immediately after it had occurred, to a party, who, like himself, was obliged to live a good deal out of doors, and the party had sneaked upon him, and given information to the Peelers; that was how he was made to give evidence against his will. He had gone into the country to avoid doing so, but they (the Peelers) had tracked him out. He had told the whole

truth, with respect to the details of the struggle. He had not exaggerated the violence of the deceased at all, or endeavoured to mitigate, out of gratitude, that of the other young gentleman. Witness had nothing more to say, and was sorry to have had to say so much. Hoped that his appearance in that court would not be considered against him; everything *was* against you, as a general rule, with the Peelers, no matter what you did."

Park-keeper recalled: "The water was above the body when he first discovered it; and he should say at least two inches over the mouth. Had heard the evidence of last witness. Nothing could have been easier for any man, however exhausted, than to have dragged the body to dry land. To leave a man in such a position, was, in his opinion, to commit murder."

"Murder!" "Murder!" How that word—which he had been looking for all along—seemed to repeat itself in Frederick's eyes throughout the next sentence! And why did they begin printing in red ink? How the letters danced and swung before him! What was that

the Coroner said? A column of words, and over the page. Nothing but "Murder, murder, murder!" What did the jury say? That could be read easily enough, at least. The artful printers had done it in phosphorus. It was written in letters of flame :

Wilful Murder against some Person unknown.

CHAPTER XI.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

As Frederick Galton read the words with which the last chapter closed, the miserable strips of garden and the short parallels of wall upon which he looked, faded from his gaze like a dissolving view, and in their place a thousand windows, filled with eager cruel faces, seemed to hem him in. The lean, bare gravel, too, was alive with them, and on the roofs, and even on the chimney-pots, they crowded together close, and every eye was on him. As thick as bees they clung, but not so black as such a dense crowd should be. They had been black a moment before; but a shadow had been suddenly withdrawn, as it seemed, and then all was light, just as on a great race-course, the human paving of the grand-stand gal-

lery darkens and lightens in a second, as ten thousand faces turn to left and right. But this was no such scene; there was no course, no space—only a vast sheet of white, expectant faces. Ah, he knew what it was now.

In his first days of London-life—and had he ever lived anywhere else? Did he seem to know anybody in the world except London people? Was not all that peaceful part of his brief existence in Downshire a mere blissful dream?—In his first few months of his literary apprenticeship, I say, he had made a practice of seeing all the various spectacles which metropolitan life afforded, no matter how few attractions they might possess for him in themselves. Young gentlemen of letters sometimes frequent very questionable places willingly enough, under the pretence that the exigencies of their profession demand that they should make themselves acquainted with every aspect of humanity; and perhaps Frederick Galton had done this. But when, upon a certain occasion, he had gone to the Old Bailey to witness

the execution of a fellow-creature, it was certainly not from any love of the horrible. He had not enjoyed that terrible spectacle which the Law still now and then gratuitously provides for the rabble after the old Roman fashion. It had filled him with loathing and dismay. He had been unable, even then, to divorce himself from the position of the unhappy criminal. Suppose (he had thought) that it was *I* who am presently to be brought out into that open space yonder, and then to be strangled! suppose that it is for *me*, alive, and desirous of living, that that bell is tolling; that in five minutes from this time the sun and the broad heaven are to be shut out from my gaze for ever, and, an outlaw from the world of men, I am suddenly, but not, ah me, not unconsciously cast into the black gulf of Death! Even to a brutish man, such a doom is almost always terrible; but to one like Frederick, full of vitality, of youth, of imagination, and capable of, nay, instinct with, spiritual as well as physical fear, how stupendous must be the horrors of such a doom. How wicked, how diaboli-

cally cruel, such a fate must seem to him that is about to undergo it—no matter by what crime he may have brought it upon himself—when a word spoken by one man would save him, perhaps, even then, or a few lines of writing; and yet nothing is spoken, nothing written, and neither hand nor voice in all that countless throng of his fellow-men is raised in protest. The last sight his eyes will gaze upon, and which he will take with him into eternity, is that of a sea of faces bidding him no God-speed, but if not feasting upon his dying agonies, coldly watching him depart; exactly as some severe landed proprietor might watch a trespasser “off the premises,” and caring not at all, so long as he left them, whither he went.

It was this same scene which now recurred to Frederick Galton’s mind with hideous distinctness; there was no gallows, no funereal scaffold, but there was the same countless concourse of inexorable faces all concentrated upon a single point—*himself*. He was about to be hung before them all. At the real

execution-scene, leaning out of window in the early morning (he had taken with others a room in a house opposite, the night before), and watching the ribald crowd, as it swayed and tossed, he had wondered within himself which of the evil faces spread beneath him would be the first to take the place of him who was about to suffer. It was very probable, nay, almost certain, that one of those forty thousand ruffians would earn for himself the same shameful end; and which, then, would it be?—which? Why, who but he to whom every eye was turned, and every finger was pointed, even *now*. The bell had been tolling this long time, and the people were getting impatient for the show. What was that continued knocking? He had heard it for hours through that night before the hanging, and never did carpenter's work give forth such a direful sound. But why should they knock now? Perhaps they were getting the coffin ready? "Galton, Galton!" Ay, Galton, was his name, but what did that matter; he should be a mere bundle of clothes within a few moments.

"Galton, Galton! if you don't open the door, I'll break it in," cried a voice outside the room.

Frederick raised his head from the window-sill, upon which it had fallen—he knew not how long, perhaps hours ago, perhaps only a minute—and slowly gathered himself up. Had he been in a fit, or dreaming? The newspaper was lying on the ground, with the huge black heading of the Inquest plainly visible—*that* was no dream, alas! Who was this so importunate to enter, that he threatened to break his way in? Had they found out the murderer already, then? His soul was innocent of all blood-stain; he could not have acted differently, and yet preserved his own life; he had no cause, or scarcely any, so far as this matter was concerned, to fear God, Who knew all things; but he had great cause to fear Man, who knew nothing, but would suspect much. Why had he not at once given himself up to the police, and explained all, just as it occurred? How vain it was to dream that what had been done would be made known, but not his own share of it! Was it too late to make a clean

breast of it even now? Yes; too late by far. Why, the butler in Park Street had not only seen him with the bouquet-holder given by Eugenie, but had even offered, as he left the house, to wrap it up for him; Freke, the valet, must have seen it also, and not revealed the fact solely upon his (Frederick's) account. Discovery was certain, and it would not be slow. God help his wife and child! He was not without a plan, however, that might save them from shame, while it saved him from punishment. He knew himself to be a match for most men in sagacity and mental skill. If he could only recover from the mere shock of the misfortune that had overwhelmed him, all might yet be well, or what was well by contrast to what might be. In the mass of inky cloud which, full of storied thunder, overhung the present, there was not a chink of light to be seen; but far off—ever so far away, in the no less threatening horizon—he saw, or thought he saw, a slender ray of light. Upon that, henceforth, he must fix his eyes, and never—no, not for one single instant—look to right or left, but only on that ray.

There had been silence for a little without, but now there was the dull sound of metal applied to wood; they were placing a chisel against the lock of the door, or endeavouring to prise it open with a crow-bar. Frederick strode swiftly forward, and turned the key.

“Come in,” cried he; “I am sorry to have kept you out so long, whoever you are; I have been fast asleep.”

Three anxious and excited faces met his own; those of Mrs. Gideon, and of the maid-of-all-work, and the distinguished lineaments, transmitted through so many generations, of Mr. Percival Potts. The first two showed unmistakable signs of disappointment. They had expected a tragedy; they had looked for blood slowly oozing from under the door; and to hear that their queer lodger had been only asleep was a bathos. Mr. Potts’s countenance, on the other hand, expressed exceeding relief.

“Upon my word, Galton,” said he, “you frightened me not a little. I am truly glad that your wife was

taking her walk with the nurse and little master, else she would have been frightened to death."

"Lor', sir, what a turn you gave us!" exclaimed the landlady; "leastways, me and Martha; and nothing to come of it, after all!" Her eye wandered round the room in search of traces of gore. "Well, we ought to be thankful for *that*, at all events."

"I am a very sound sleeper," returned Frederick; 'you ought to know that, Mrs. Gideon, by this time. Never mind picking up the newspaper, thank you; I rather like a litter.—No; you can do nothing more for me; I dare say this gentleman can tell me without your assistance why he took such trouble to wake me."

The landlady and her myrmidon withdrew, and Percival Potts held the door open until he saw them well down-stairs; then closing it, and speaking very slowly and distinctly, he said: "You will have read the account of the inquest on young Meyrick, I suppose."

"Yes, I have," said Frederick.

He was again looking out of the window. It seemed as if Mrs. Gideon's grove of clothes-props had some strange fascination for him, for he never withdrew his gaze throughout the subsequent interview.

"The verdict is a most ridiculous one," continued the editor. "I have always contended that the whole jury-system is rotten to the core; but such an example of dulness and obstinacy as this"—he touched the newspaper with his foot contemptuously—"has not been given for many a day. Nothing could be clearer than the language of the coroner. The crime, if it could be called a crime, did not certainly go beyond manslaughter—I don't mean to say it was even that—but that should have been the extent of the verdict. If this beggar and outcast was to be depended upon at all—and I confess I think he spoke the truth—the offence committed was Justifiable Homicide; if he invented the story, it was Suicide."

"He did not invent the story," said Frederick quietly.

"I think not," returned the editor; "and everybody

will be of that opinion. The fear is"—here, for the first time, he ceased to gaze at a tawdry print above the fireplace, and stole a furtive glance at Frederick—"the fear is, that this poor wretch will be credited with knowing more than he has chosen to reveal. He will be thought to have screened the man for whom he entertained such grateful sentiments, and to have given a rose-coloured version of his part in the matter. That was what inclined those idiots, contrary to the direction of the coroner, to return a verdict of——, to return so strained a verdict. It may, therefore, go very hard with the accused person—very hard, indeed."

There was a knock at the door, and Mrs. Galton entered with her sweet smile.

"How kind of you, dear Mr. Percival Potts" (the editor liked to be called by both these titles, and if he had but had another Christian name, would have most certainly connected them together by a hyphen), "how very kind of you to come and see my husband; I assure you, you are highly honoured, for he would not admit even Mr. Johnson into his sanctum yester-

day. He has been very unwell, indeed ; but I do trust he has turned the corner now. How do you think he is looking ?”

“If I am to speak the truth, Mrs. Galton, I think him looking far from well. I had heard bad tidings, and for that reason I came here to-day upon a matter in which I want your warmest advocacy. What your husband needs, is an immediate change of air and scene. He has been stived up here in town too long.”

“Ah, that is quite true,” cried Mary ; “now do persuade him of that. And we have just got an invitation down to Casterton. Will it not do him all the good in the world to spend a few weeks upon the breezy downs ?”

“That would not be change enough,” replied Mr. Potts positively ; “he should leave England altogether, if it would not seriously inconvenience you, Mrs. Galton, and that at once.” He spoke with great gravity and earnestness, and Mary answered swiftly : “I am ready to go with him to-morrow—to-night if he pleases—

wherever it is thought best that he should be. All places are alike to me where my husband is."

She spoke with such simple gentleness, that Frederick turned his worn white face towards her for an instant yearningly.

"Crede non illam tibi de scelestâ"

"*Plebe delectam*," exclaimed the editor with enthusiasm; "you have got a wife to be proud of, Galton. Forgive me, my dear madam, but I am an old man, and privileged to say what I think."

"I have nothing else to offer him but my love, sir," observed Mary quietly; "where did you think that he had better go?"

"I have arranged a plan for him to go to Sweden—as our special correspondent," answered the editor. "We have been long in want of such a person at Christiana."

Frederick made an effort to rise from his seat, but his strength seemed to fail him; still keeping his face averted from the other, he held out his hand, and Potts came forward and took it.

"I am very much obliged to you, my friend; very. I shall never forget this."

"A vessel starts to-night—in four hours' time—from London Bridge," said the editor in his ear; "I have secured accommodation for the nurse and child, as well as for yourselves. To-morrow may be too late."

"Thank you, thank you. God bless you! friend, indeed. But I cannot go."

"Does your wife know?" whispered the other. Frederick shook his head.

"Would she know if she read the inquest?"

"Yes, I think so," was the murmured reply.

"Mrs. Galton," said the editor solemnly, "leave your husband to me for a few minutes. Take this paper with you to pass the time." Frederick ground his heel upon it, as though he would nail it to the floor, but the other dragged it away, and placed it in her hand. "Read it, true wife; there is bad news in it, and that concerns one beside poor Meyrick; but you will know how to bear it, and when you have read it, come back, and add your voice to mine."

She looked inquiringly towards Frederick, but he did not stir, nor even turn his head. She passed out with the paper in her hand, and went into her own room. Her husband did not know that she had seen him return home that fatal morning with dripping garments, and was aware of his attempt to dry them, or had heard him tell that falsehood about the coffee to Mrs. Gideon, or was cognizant of his putting the stair-clock back—he knew none of the various ways in which he had betrayed himself to her as an evil-doer—but he felt very sure that the mention of the bouquet-holder by the beggar-witness, would instantly bring to her recollection the warning Eugenie had conveyed to him through her unconscious hands, and thereby reveal to her the fatal truth. He well knew, too, that she would never counsel him to fly.

“To-morrow may be too late, Galton,” repeated the editor, breaking the painful silence; “think again.”

“I *have* thought; I have done nothing else but think, my friend, ever since. At first I could not make up my mind. It was tossed to and fro like some

wretched craft in a storm, for which there is no favouring wind, whatever blows, and every coast is rock-girt."

"Poor lad, poor lad!" the sub-editor of the *Porcupine* and sole conductor of the chief government organ, gave ocular evidence—tears—of his being merely human like the rest of us. "But consider, Frederick, my dear boy, we must steer for some port."

"I know that well," groaned Frederick; "but with respect to your kind offer, you have had my answer. I shall stay here. Still, if my wife should side with you, when she has read that paper! Ah, 'true wife,' indeed—that was well said! The best on earth, and I have ruined her—her and her child too. I would cut my right hand off, to be as you are at this moment, friend; unmarried, alone—bearing my own burden of shame and sorrow!"

"But surely, Galton, if she has known nothing of all this before, and learns for the first time, what is printed in that paper—should her judgment be relied upon to decide a question like this?"

Frederick smiled sadly, but not faintly. "You do not know her yet; she is very brave and very wise: for has not Love its logic? Hush! she is coming back again. Let it be 'Yes' or 'No,' according to her voice. Well, dearest, shall we sail for Sweden, or stay here?"

It was well for him that he was not looking at her. There are stories told, almost incredible, of strong men's hair turning grey in one long night of agony, but Mary Galton was scarcely less changed than such in those ten minutes. Her face was colourless, even to her lips. Her saintly eyes, the homes of unutterable wretchedness, seemed to pine within their hollow niches for a tear. Potts, gazing on her with tender pity, trembled for her reason; yet she was never calmer, more self-possessed, more heedful—resolve had never firmer seat than on that little mouth. She put her arms around her husband's neck, and kissed him once, not passionately, but setting, as it were, upon his cheek the seal of her fidelity and love, about to be tried by new and strange ordeals. It was no time "to sicken and to

swoon," nor yet for toying. Danger—death, perhaps, was threatening her beloved. "Let us not sail, my love," whispered she; "let us stay here."

"We stay, my friend," said Frederick; "we do not leave England."

"As you please, Galton," replied the editor, cheerfully. "We must, in that case, do what we can on another tack. I shall go at once to Griffiths—the man that played Bassanio."

Frederick shook his head, or seemed to do so. Perhaps he only shuddered at some recollection which that name evoked.

"Nay," cried Potts, "if you will not help yourself your friends must help you."

"His friends must help him," observed Mary quietly. "Who is this Griffiths?"

"A clever lawyer," replied Potts; "a man to trust one's life to before a jury. Money will be wanted, of course; and the *Porcupine* shall be your banker. There will be no difficulty whatever"—

Mary flitted from the room, and returned to it before

he could finish the sentence, swift, calm, and noiseless as a ghost.

"Here is a cheque for five hundred pounds," said she; "take it, and if more is wanted, it will be forthcoming. I never felt before how precious gold could be."

"I will take it," said the editor, rising, "since you can spare it, and use as much of it as is necessary. Whatever happens, Mrs. Galton—*whatever happens*, do not lose heart—your courage will be tried to the uttermost; but bear up for his sake."

"I shall bear up," said Mary.

"I am sure you will, brave heart! Let me know everything that occurs. You may feel that I am working ceaselessly, since"—he looked towards the silent and motionless form that still resolutely kept its back to them—"since he will not work himself. *Semper constans* has been the motto of the Pottses, madam, for ages."

The editor's last sentence was a vulgar lie. His appearance was far from impressive, or even gentlemanly; his noble sentiments had a very appreciable flavour of

whisky about them, for Mr. Potts could not refrain from imbibing that admirable liquor, even in the daytime. But as he took Mrs. Galton's hand in his, and touched it with his lips, an air of genuine chivalry pervaded him, such as the bearing of no knight of old—no, not that of the “Stainless King” himself—could have excelled.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TEXT FROM SAMUEL.

MR. PERCIVAL POTTS had truly observed, with reference to his friend's proposed departure, that "to-morrow would be too late." Upon that very evening, just as Frederick had retired to his dressing-room, there came a hybrid knock to the front-door, administered by that most intelligent and active officer, Inspector Links. He had none of the paraphernalia of justice about him, save what could be carried in the pocket; but Mary, looking from her window, recognised his errand at a glance. She was in her husband's room and in his arms in an instant. How much there was to say in the mere span of time that was left to them! Ever since the editor had gone, they had been incessantly conversing—communing, I should rather call it, for

their talk was very earnest and tranquil—and yet it now seemed that they had said nothing. Both had avoided altogether that subject upon which all other tongues were loose, and which affected themselves so nearly. Yet there was something Frederick had meant to tell his wife, procrastinated to this fatal moment, but which it was absolutely necessary that she should know before they parted. This was with reference to the line of defence that he wished his counsel to adopt upon his trial. As he had told his friend he had “done nothing else but think ever since”—that is, from the moment he perceived his error in not having confessed his involuntary share in Meyrick’s catastrophe—he had done nothing else but devise schemes for averting its consequences to himself. Of the two plans which had most often recurred to his mind, flight, as we have seen, had been discarded ; the other still remained. He had always leaned towards it, and a chance expression of his wife had increased his confidence therein ; but he had never told her what it was. It was, indeed, almost impossible to tell her, or to tell any one directly.

The difficulty of expressing it, quite as much as the disinclination for the subject to which it belonged, had hitherto kept him silent. And now there was scarcely time for speech at all, however direct, far less for innuendo. Inspector Links, who had nevertheless made no unseemly haste in the matter—since an ally, in plain clothes, was watching “the back,” and two, in blue, the front of the little mansion, so that if the mouse were in the trap at all, he was quite safe—Inspector Links, I say, having thrown a passing glance into the parlour, was even now coming upstairs, as though he were the builder whose genius had conceived the edifice, or, at all events, as one who possessed a very accurate plan of its apartments, and had been given a hint with respect to their occupation. He was actually at the threshold of the room marked (in his own mind) as Mr. Frederick Galton’s dressing-room, and, hearing voices, he made so bold as to look in.

“I beg your pardon, mum,” said he, apologetically, yet keeping his eye fixed upon the object of his visit, and not on the lady; “I have a very unpleasant

duty to perform. I think, mum, you had better withdraw."

"What is your business, sir?" inquired Mary. "Anything you have to say to my husband may be spoken before me."

"O, this *is* Mr. Galton, is it?" said the inspector, not without an accent of relief, for it was a case, in his opinion, where a party ought to have "bolted, sharp," and put the seas between him and the possibility of a public expression of censure from twelve of his fellow-countrymen—"then it is my painful errand to make you my prisoner. Shall I mention the charge before the lady?"

"No," said Frederick hurriedly. "I am ready to accompany you, Mr. Inspector; but please to let me have five minutes' private talk with my wife here; then I shall be quite at your service."

Mingled with shame and wretchedness, there was enough of agonized distraction in Frederick Galton's countenance to excite suspicion in even a less prudent man than the person whom he addressed.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Galton," was his reply, "but the charge against you, as you are doubtless aware, is a most serious one. You will have plenty of opportunities of seeing your wife—subject to the regulations of the—the place whither I am about to convey you; but, upon my own responsibility, I dare not, sir, leave you, either alone or together, with her in private. You can say anything you please to her in my presence; but I warn you to be cautious, if you are about to speak with reference to the crime of which you stand accused, since any admission may be used against you at your trial. If you wish, on the other hand, to speak only of domestic matters, a peace-officer should have no ears in such a case, and you may consider me as not being present."

"You are very kind, sir," said Mary humbly.

How stupendous seemed this man's power, who could carry off her husband in an instant, before her very eyes; and how great his mercy since he did not do so, but lent him to her for a few priceless minutes still.

"Bring me our child," whispered Frederick; and Mary ran to fetch him from his cot upstairs.

The little innocent being of a sprightly nature, and always more ready for caress than sleep, stretched out its arms and clung to its father, in a manner that moved Mr. Links himself.

Then came the parting between the husband and wife, which was silent and terrible. Neither knew exactly when they would meet again, but they both knew—whenever it was—that it would be in Newgate.

"Remember me to all, dearest, who do not forget me in my trouble; and let Bassanio know, to-morrow—do not tell him, but only give him to understand—that I take great comfort from this book." He touched a Bible lying on the table, in which they had been reading together not an hour before.

"Yes, Frederick." There was not a trace of wonder in her face; to the outward eye—or, in other words, to Mr. Inspector Links—she appeared almost too stupefied with sorrow to understand what was said. But, in reality, like Dionysius' chamber, she was all ear;

she drank in every syllable like precious drops in drought.

“I have just marked the verse that gives me greatest comfort.”

He spoke these words with great distinctness, and very differently from the inarticulate farewell that followed. There was a cab at the door, with some one inside already; Frederick entered and took his seat by the side of this person. The inspector followed, sitting with his back to the horse, which did not make him ill. He could accommodate himself to most situations in life. The vehicle drove off, watched by Mary—the most miserable woman, perhaps, in all wretched London. Yet she shed no tear; she had something else to do than weep. She went upstairs to Frederick’s room—how unspeakably lonely and deserted it had grown within that minute or two—and opened his Bible, in the place where he had folded down the leaf. It was at the twenty-first chapter of the First Book of Samuel, and there was a slight pencil-mark at the thirteenth verse: “And he changed his behaviour

before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands."

She carefully erased the pencil-mark, and straightened back the leaf. But the words were stereotyped in her own mind from that time forth—and the meaning of the words.

CHAPTER XIII.

FOREWARNED AND FOREARMED.

SERIOUS trouble has an enormous power of attraction. There are some persons connected to us by blood or marriage, whom we never see except at the funerals of one's common relatives. Nothing short of death brings us together at present, but it is probable that if the suspicion of a great crime fell upon ourselves, it would have the same effect. The second-cousin, or the wife's uncle—as the case may be—would hurry up to the scene of action from Cornwall or the depths of Wales, full of interest for the connexion who had so unexpectedly become a felon in embryo. The same sympathy might not be manifested after conviction, but while the matter was *in dubio*, even the most distant branches of the family-tree would undoubtedly,

as the phrase runs, "rally round one." If this would be the effect upon one's wife's uncle, it would, of course, be vastly intensified with one's personal friends. I don't mean to say, that all the expressed sympathy would be genuine, nor even that your misfortune might not be a positive satisfaction to some vile minds, but for the most part, it would be well-meant and trustworthy. Even the public at large feels pity for an accused person, and would save him, even if guilty—supposing that there were no particular circumstances to excite their indignation—from the extremity of the punishment which his crime has earned. We may easily imagine, therefore, what pity, as well as amazement, the arrest of Frederick Galton produced among all those persons with whom we have been made acquainted in this history. How the news that Master Frederick was accused of having murdered the young Squire fell upon quiet Casterton, and froze all hearts with horror; how the woe, in which the Grange was already plunged, was deepened by it; how Mr. Tregarton broke out with an ancestral cath or two, and

thanked God, very heartily, that good old Dr. Galton had not lived to see that day; how the crippled pensioner prayed that such things might not be true; and Jacob Lunes tore the lying newspaper in twain that brought it. How Farmer Groves said he could never believe it, but did believe it nevertheless, and took a fearful joy in talking of the matter to all he met. How Mrs. Hartopp fell down like one in a fit when the thing was told her, and never (as was subsequently said with truth) was the same woman again. How the Rev. Robert Morrit received it, none could tell by his outward looks; but if he was stunned, he was not stupefied, for he instantly wrote a business-letter respecting the transference of his clerical duties for an indefinite period, and putting his cheque-book in his pocket, came up forthwith to Somers Town. How the news broadened on to Oldborough, and darkened the shadow of the limes upon the cottage, and blanched the widow's russet cheek, and palsied for a moment even the quick intelligence of Jane Perling; yet, scarce a tremulous word was spoken ere her nimble fingers were busy

packing up such things as were needful, and Mary had her mother and sister Jane to bide with her in her great trouble before the next morning dawned. How it flashed down to Camford, where the memory of the brilliant Frenchman was still alive, and the disgrace of Meyrick had not ceased to be a topic for talk at Undergraduate "wines." How the dreary old dons, in combination rooms, snapped at the subject, like sharks who after a long fish-diet, share amongst them a plump sailor-boy. How this and that bright saying of Frederick's in his palmy time was repeated and greedily listened to; and how all that had known him, however slightly, including the old porter at Minim Hall, found themselves suddenly lions. How Mrs. Hermann clasped her hands, and trembled to think how she had once harboured a murderer, or, at all events, had showed him great hospitality, and that at a considerable expense; and how the good doctor rebuked her, in a manner altogether beyond experience, and shut himself up in his own study to mourn over the lad, who was even as the apple of his own eye, and had altogether

usurped the place of the Greek particles in his heart's affections.

Nor was the excitement less in London itself, where if Frederick Galton had few old friends, he had many new ones, ready enough to acknowledge their intimacy with him, at a time when each acknowledgment could be exchanged for an invitation to dinner. The dowager Lady Ackers had forbidden the painful subject to be alluded to in her presence, connected as she unhappily was by friendship with the family of the victim, and by acquaintanceship with the accused himself; but Sir Geoffrey, on the contrary, was a strong partisan of the latter, touched by the remembrance of their college days, and partly, perhaps, by the consciousness that he had behaved somewhat harshly to Frederick in the matter of that visit to his intended in Grosvenor Square. "The poor young fellow had been half out of his mind all along," said he, "and should not be judged like some folks. Every man who knew him at Camford used to call him Mad Galton. Why, he was stark mad to have married as he did. It was ridiculous

to put a fellow like that in Newgate, and try him for murder." We have seen how Percival Potts was bestirring himself loyally for the man who had been once his enemy; and we may be sure that Mr. Jonathan Johnson was not behind-hand in good offices. Both gentlemen had seen the bouquet-holder in Frederick's hand when they parted from him in Park Lane that eventful morning, and so soon as they knew where it had been found, they communicated to one another their suspicions. Neither had attributed to Frederick a worse part in the sad catastrophe than he had really taken; their sagacity had in fact possessed them of the precise circumstances of the case, even before the coroner's inquest; but a jury, as they were well aware, would not be composed of such men as they, whose own judgment, moreover, would doubtless have been less lenient, had they not known their man. They trembled for the result of a trial. They had suggested flight—for the proposal had come from their united counsels—not because they feared that the verdict of Wilful Murder, or anything nearly so serious, would

be maintained in a criminal court, but because they felt that Frederick Galton would be incapable of enduring any punishment, however slight, which might be accorded to a felon. They knew that a sensitive nature like his must needs break down under it, and that if he survived it even, he would never be fit for anything afterwards. The law, in imposing imprisonment as the penalty of his offence, would, in fact, be awarding Death, or at all events, utter Ruin. When, therefore, Frederick Galton firmly declined to take advantage of the offer of a passage to Sweden, Mr. Potts had returned to Mr. Johnson's quarters greatly crest-fallen.

"My opinion is that nothing can save the poor lad now, Johnson. Whatever he gets from the judge, will drive him mad. If you had only seen him as I have just seen him—silent, shrinking, haggard—you would almost have thought he was mad already."

Mr. Jonathan Johnson held up his finger, as if to ask for a little time for thought; then after a long pause, placing it upon the other's sleeve, he whispered

earnestly: "Don't you think that it might be proved in court that he has been ma—ma—mad *all along*?"

Upon this text the two editors held close discourse for more than an hour, after which, late as it was, they went off together in a hansom cab to the residence of that eminent criminal attorney, Mr. Clene Hans. This immaculate gentleman, being put in possession of the result of their deliberations, at first did nothing but shake his head, and utter the two monosyllables, "Won't do, won't do;" but eventually, the matter being more fully set before him in all its bearings, he condescended to observe that the idea might be valuable, and should have his best attention. So valuable, indeed, did Mr. Clene Hans consider it, that immediately after breakfast the next morning he set out for Mr. Griffiths' chambers, with a whole plan of operations born of the said idea, mapped out in his subtle brain, ready to lay before that gentleman. It would have been difficult for the present writer, not being of the legal profession, to describe the delicate and cautious methods by which the sagacious attorney

would have approached the subject in hand—would have broken to his counsel the rather startling proposition of defending from the charge of Wilful Murder, upon the plea of insanity, a client whom both probably believed to be sane; but Mr. Griffiths himself relieved the attorney (and with him myself) from his somewhat embarrassing position, by remarking at the outset, that he owed Mr. Clene Hans an apology for having done a somewhat unprofessional thing that morning, since, without attorney intervention, he had received instructions concerning that unhappy case of Mr. Frederick Galton's. In point of fact Mrs. Galton herself had left him only a few minutes ago after a protracted interview; and he was happy to say—here Mr. Griffiths, who was nursing his knee after the usual chamber-practice fashion, got immensely interested in the toe of his elevated boot. Yes, he was truly gratified to say that the case might be divested of its criminal aspect—its more painful features—upon the ground of”——.

“It seems from what his friends, Messrs. Potts and Johnson, were telling me last night,” said the attorney,

filling up an awkward pause, "that the poor fellow is as mad as a March hare."

"Just so," said the barrister, letting his leg down for the first time, "our plea is Insanity. I met him myself curiously enough on the very night of the occurrence at this Meyrick's own house, and he seemed to be a strange fish—very. He has had the sense to marry an excellent wife, however, and yet I have heard there was something queer even about that."

"It is a pity we cannot *subpœna* you, Mr. Griffiths," observed the attorney slyly; "Johnson and Potts will both give strongish evidence, I should think."

"Very good," replied Mr. Griffiths; "here's a long list of witnesses to be written to. That woman's head is straight upon *her* shoulders, whether her husband's is turned or not; she was as quiet and collected as you are. We must get Dr. Beebonnet or Dr. Crotchet to see the poor fellow in Newgate; the medical evidence will be of vast importance."

"We had better have them both," remarked the attorney. "The more 'Experts' we have the——eh?"

Mr. Clene Hans finished his sentence with an expressive twinkle of his eye.

"Certainly," returned the barrister with an answering smile. "I should recommend ten instead of two, if it was not all-important to keep our line of defence as dark as possible."

Mr. Griffiths was well aware—perhaps even from personal experience—how easy it is for men to fully persuade themselves of anything which is in accordance with their own interests. This is a still less difficult task when, instead of interest, some softer passion, such as friendship, love, or even pity, inclines us to accept an idea; for in that case, confident that we are actuated by no selfish motive, we immediately fall a prey to our own good impulses. Hence, let it not be imagined, because such of Frederick Galton's friends, as it was thought desirable to communicate with upon the subject, all more or less fell into the new theory as to the unsound state of his mind, that they did anything dishonest in so doing.

Did you ever have any reason to suppose, from any-

thing Mr. Frederick Galton has said or done, that he was labouring under mental aberration? Have his opinions been always consonant with those of a sane mind? Has not his behaviour, within your own knowledge, been often *outré* and extravagant? Have you ever heard it remarked by others that he was strange and eccentric to an extraordinary degree? Have you ever made a remark to this effect yourself, and if so, to whom? &c., &c.

These are questions which, being put to our friends even in a careless manner respecting our own selves, would not be answered upon the instant. They would most of them pause a little, and perhaps even admit that now they began to think about it, there had certainly been always something strange about us, and which had been very unaccountable to them. If these inquiries, the object of them being unknown, were headed *Private*, and emanated from a legal firm, nine-tenths of the respondents would decline to commit themselves to any opinion upon so very open a question as that of our being mad or sane. But if the

avowed intention was to save us from the gallows, the suspicion always existing as to the unhappy state of our mind would be found to have been almost universal among those who knew (and loved) us best. We must have had quite a speciality for the Commonplace if a hundred acts which we have done in our lives did not bear a very eccentric appearance from *that* point of view. It would not much signify what particular crime we committed—except that the worse it was the better—for we should always find a score of honest people to protest that it was nothing more than they had expected all along.

By the week's end, Mr. Clene Hans was in the possession of such testimony as made him believe in the insanity of his unfortunate client quite as firmly as he believed in anything else; and Mr. Griffiths, thanks to repeated interviews with Mrs. Galton, had accomplished the same mental feat within even a less period. The kink in the cable, which was otherwise running smoothly out to the satisfaction of all concerned, occurred, as it often does, exactly where nothing of the

kind was apprehended—namely, with respect to the medical evidence. Mr. Clene Hans had been unwise in engaging two such very distinguished authorities as Drs. Beebonnet and Crotchet. Either of them would have done his work admirably alone, or in conjunction with one too insignificant to be a rival; but their reputations as mad doctors were too European to admit of their acting in unison. Each had his theory, in defence of which he would have gone to the scaffold, or, at all events, as in the present case, would have cheerfully let another man go there, rather than give it up. They had each written a book upon *Dementia Adventitia*, out of either of which nineteen-twentieths of the human race could be proved to be eligible for Hanwell; but they differed upon the vital question of How people ought to go mad. There is a right way and a wrong way of doing everything, and whether Frederick Galton fulfilled all the proper conditions in taking leave of his senses was the question in point. Of course he did not himself allow that he was mad—no really mad person ever does that; and no sane person of intelligence who

thinks of pretending to be mad would ever dream of doing it. He would be an audacious impostor, indeed, who would counterfeit Mad Tom to the life. The pantomime of the Insane is perfect, each passion being imitated by unmistakable signs ; and even if this could be satisfactorily parodied, it would require the vigilance of Argus to subdue every impulse, to fetter every mobile feature, and to hush every syllable upon the lips which Nature—who is sane above all things—suggests continually even to the most habitual dissembler. There were a thousand circumstances attendant upon his position quite sufficient to make poor Frederick Galton appear very different from the rest of his fellow-creatures. He had genuine fits of frenzy when there seemed nothing for it but to dash his head against the prison walls, and so to end life and shame together ; but generally he was sullen and passive, which was the very best thing, for the object he had in view, which he could do. Still, Dr. Crotchet had doubts, principally because Dr. Beebonnet had none, and was understood to disbelieve in the *bond fide*

character of their patient's or client's supposed madness. It would be very awkward to have to put the latter gentleman in the witness-box alone, and to be compelled to admit in cross-examination that their other expert had leaned to the side of the prosecution. Yet there was only one more interview to be held between the doctors and the accused. Mr. Clene Hans would have given fifty pounds to have been able to prove *dementia naturalis* against Crotchet himself. "Obstinate old idiot" was, indeed, the very expression which he privately applied to him.

It seemed as if even Mary Galton, who was "moving heaven and earth" for her husband's good, could be of no possible use in such a hitch as this ; nor could she have been but for the following circumstance. Having permission to see her husband every day, although never without the presence of some attendant, she had taken the fullest advantage of that privilege. On a certain afternoon, while on her way towards Newgate as usual with her mother (who waited for her outside the prison, but could never be induced to

go inside), a little ragged boy brushed by her, and as he did so, put a letter in her hand. They were on the wrong side of a crossing at the moment, and Widow Perling's mind was far too deeply occupied with the perils of the way before them to have any eyes except for the vehicles, each of which was to her as a car of Juggernaut. The note was written in pencil upon the leaf of a pocket-book, and ran thus: "I must see you, Mary dear, before you see your husband this day, and in private. I am following you now.—EUGENIE."

"Mother," said Mary, holding up this scrap of paper, "I have just got news telling me I must go on alone. I will see you safely into a cab, but I must go by myself to-day."

A few weeks back, Mrs. Perling would never have consented to leave her daughter thus in the crowded streets; but their relative positions were now reversed. It seemed as if Mary was competent to take care of anybody, including her sweet self.

"You know best, dear," returned the old lady simply,

and submitted to be placed in a four-wheel as unresistingly as luggage.

Then Mary looked back, but only saw a number of strangers of her own sex crowding around the window of a fashion-shop. She did not recognise, at first, the graceful form of Eugenie in widow's weeds.

The two women wrung one another's hands without a word. Then, "Where can we go to be alone?" said Mrs. Meyrick. "I have something to tell you that must be told at once."

There are not many places in London where ladies can step in together and converse in private. The only place of refuge that offered itself to these two was a pastry-cook's shop. There—sitting at a small smeared table before a couple of little basins of untouched soup, and surrounded by a crowd of economical, genteel females, come up from the suburbs for a day's shopping in town, and partaking of their mid-day meal—the widow of the slain and the wife of the slayer held their talk. Few scenes could have been more incongruous with such a meeting; and yet, perhaps,

neither of them knew that they were otherwise than alone.

“How is Monsieur de Lernay?” inquired Mary.

“My father is dying,” returned the other shuddering. “Let us not talk of that. I am come to speak of the living, for whom there is yet hope. Listen. I was in the city this morning, upon business connected with our removal to Lozere. His native air is recommended to my poor father, though I doubt whether he will live to breathe it. I was caught in that storm this morning, and got into an omnibus—I am humble enough, dear Mary, now, and no longer rich—and next to me there sat two gentlemen, whose names I do not know even now, but they are known to *you*. They spoke in French, because the omnibus was full of people, and they did not wish what they said to be overheard. It seemed that they were doctors, and had been upon a professional visit, to determine the sanity, or otherwise, of a certain person lying under accusation in jail. They could not agree upon the matter; but their arguments were so technical and scientific, that

I could scarcely understand them. One thought that he could advocate the plea of insanity, and the other thought that he could not; but both agreed that they should be greatly influenced by the success, or otherwise, of a certain stratagem which they had planned that day. You comprehend me, Mary dear?"

"A glass of sherry, ladies?" inquired a female attendant, leaning over them confidentially. "Ladies often take a glass of sherry after a journey. I trust that the soup is to your liking."

"The soup is excellent," replied Eugenie quietly. "Bring two glasses of sherry, if you please."

The sherry was brought, and thereby freedom from interruption purchased.

"The stratagem was this, Mary. They affected, this morning, to be both convinced of his being really mad. 'These fits of frenzy,' said they to some third person—the governor of the jail, I think—but so as to be just within the prisoner's hearing; 'these paroxysms are quite conclusive; the one thing that strikes us as unnatural is, that they only take place in the daytime.

The true lunatic is almost invariably as violent at night as day.' The doctors are convinced that the prisoner overheard them, and did so furtively; whether with a mere madman's cunning, or with the intention of making use of the information, remains to be seen. If he passes to-night quietly, it will be well for him; but if he behaves otherwise than usual, he will be set down as an impostor. You understand me, Mary?"

Ay, she understood her. She would have taken the slightest hint—have filled up all that was wanting in the merest skeleton of suggestion upon such a subject. The thought that struck her brain, and flushed her cheek, and kept her silent when she should have answered, was one of shame. How mean, how contemptible were these deceptions, notwithstanding the necessity that compelled them! She did not feel them upon her own account, but upon Frederick's. How frank and open had his nature always been! How scornful even of conventionalities, far more of deceit! How genuine and bright and free! When she

had said "Let us not leave England," it was because she feared what falsehood, what exaggerations, what shameful things might be said against him as a fugitive. His honour seemed, then, almost as dear to her as his life. Perhaps, too, convinced that he was incapable of actual crime, she had persuaded herself that his innocence, so far, at all events, as intention went, would be established at his trial. How impossible would it have then appeared to her that he could ever have been placed in such a position as the present—he, her generous, high-souled, open-hearted husband, to be playing the hypocrite in yonder jail, to save himself from a felon's fate !

"Do you understand, Mary dear?" repeated Eugenie.

"I understand," answered she. "How good it was of you, in your great trouble, to hasten thus"—

"Do not speak of that, Mary ; my trouble is heavy, but it is light, light as a feather compared with yours ; and I have been the cause of yours—yes partly, Mary, —although, God knows, the unwilling cause. I gave that bouquet to Mr. Galton to give to you, which my

wretched husband imagined was for himself. He should never have been my husband, Mary ; never, never. That is my crime, and from it all this misery has come. I would that I could bear it all myself. I am not punished as I deserve, Mary, as you are not rewarded. Do not look upon me so pitifully, for I have not earned your pity. Moreover, I am not so unhappy as I have been, except for that one terror that wrings your heart. If all goes well, as it is believed it will, you will have him soon again, Mary ; I am telling you no untruth, be sure ; and when that has happened, I shall be happy ; yes, by contrast, happy. When my father—when I am left quite alone, there is a religious house near Florac, in Lozere, which will receive me. Do not fear ; it is not a convent, where no news can come from those we love ; but a home fit for an erring soul like mine, that cannot give itself wholly up to God even now. My sister, whom your brother saved, is buried there. Kiss me, Mary. Tell him—though he will know it well—that I can read his soul, how pure it is of this foul stain. I must

never see him more in this world ; but if death spares me—and death is very cruel, taking away those to whom life is dear, and leaving such as I—I trust we two shall meet again !”

“ I trust so too, dear Eugenie ; God grant it may be upon a time less wretched than this in which we part.”

CHAPTER XIV.

PUBLICITY

It is a just boast among persons of the literary profession, that not one of their respectable order has ever been hung. The mind at once, of course, reverts to Dr. Dodd; but he was a clergyman, and applied himself solely to the production of theological works. I do not advance the monstrous proposition that no writer ever did or does deserve to be hung. There was Mr. W., for instance, an agreeable periodical humourist—he used to write in the *London Magazine*, under a *nom de plume*—and who murdered at least six persons, mostly females. But then he was not tried for wilful murder. He suffered transportation at the hands of five insurance companies, which had declined to reward the forethought wherewith he had provided for the

possible demise of his victims. The rarity of even such a secondary offence as fraud in a professor of literature aroused an immense interest in this gentleman's fate. His works, which, between ourselves, were nothing remarkable, were greatly sought after in consequence, and all the people that had ever dined in his company—at Holland House and elsewhere—achieved social successes so long as the excitement lasted. Yet Mr. W.'s misfortune never affected the general public nearly so much as did that of Mr. Frederick Galton. The circulation of the *Porcupine*, ten times that of the *London Magazine* in its best days, was more than doubled by the calamity of its young contributor. The *Daily Democrat* promised to its subscribers a supplement that should be solely confined to the report of his trial. The illustrated papers despatched their artists "special" down to Casterton, and Leckhamsley Round attained quite a Metropolitan reputation. There was wood enough consumed in "cuts" of poor Dr. Galton's homely mansion to have built a gallows-tree for his unhappy son. A *carte de visite* of Mrs. Hartopp,

as she sat with her back to the window of the house-keeper's room—she never stirred out now—was obtained by an enterprising photographer, and had a wonderful sale at two-and-six.

All the correspondents of the cheap press found themselves in exclusive possession of particulars concerning the Galton family. The fact of the existence of Minim Hall began to be noised abroad for the first time, and gave the neatest occasion to the *Democrat* for a pyrotechnical exposition of university abuses and shortcomings. The circumstance of the living of Casterton being sequestered (as poor Mr. Morrit used to call it), did not, on that account, escape observation, but the reverse ; and the "interim incumbent and uncle of the accused," made a very prominent figure in the indictment. The Home Secretary was harassed night and day, for admission to a private interview with the prisoner by a man who was commissioned to model him in wax for the Room of Horrors.

Conceive how terrible were all these things, or even the echoes of them, to those who really loved poor

Frederick ! How he himself imagined them all in his solitary cell, and gnashed his teeth with anguish. How Mr. Morrit's nature shrank from them as from some physical blow, notwithstanding his utter scorn for those from whom they emanated. He was not a man to take that sort of morose pleasure which some men do in undergoing the consequences of their own errors ; the cup of bitterness had no expiatory attraction for him, but was drained with shuddering and repugnance. And yet he owned that he was much to blame for what had happened. Had he made his nephew such an allowance as was suitable from the first, the Galtons and the Meyricks would have stood upon the same social level, or nearly so, and would have been intimate or not, according to circumstances. There would have been no mad jealousy engendered in John Meyrick's brain, or, at least, it would not have been brought to the bitter birth by that secret visit of Eugenie to Somers Town ; or, if the curate did not guess so much as that, he knew that but for him Mary would have been a guest at M. de Lernay's upon that fatal night, as well as her

husband, when no mischief could possibly have occurred. Now, however, it seemed as if Mr. Morrit could never do enough to express his sorrow for the past, not only in the way of pecuniary expenditure, personal exertions, and the like, but what was really some sacrifice to him, still—in the self-abnegation of all family pride and social superiority. He had always had a genuine respect for Widow Perling and her daughter, even when their existence had been most obnoxious to him, and their common misfortune now knit the three together in its loving bond. To Mary he was always making some practical apology for his former treatment of her, in delicate and thoughtful service. Any shyness or embarrassment which the poor girl might have experienced in the sudden change of her relations with the curate, was rendered impossible by the circumstances of the case; the vastness of her trouble swallowed up all minor things, and she accepted the homage of this rebel knight quite naturally, as though he had never borne arms against her cause, or refused to pay her due allegiance. It was touching to remark how he strove to

keep out of the sight and hearing of the little family all evidence of the publicity attaching to Frederick's condition, although he might have spared his pains; first because nothing could stop the tongue of Mrs. Gideon; and secondly, because the three in question cared less about what the world was saying than the world could possibly have guessed. The thoughts of Widow Perling and Jane were occupied wholly with prayers and fears for their beloved Mary, upon whom such unparalleled woe had fallen in God's inscrutable wisdom; and the mind of Mary herself never strayed for one single instant from the great problem of "How was Frederick's life to be saved?" The time had now arrived for this to be solved.

CHAPTER XV.

FOR THE PROSECUTION.

SELDOM had that squalid space in front of the Old Bailey been filled by such a fashionable throng as pressed about it on the morning of the trial of Frederick Galton; one would have thought, by the stream of carriages, that Her Majesty's Servants had temporarily transferred themselves during alterations in the Haymarket, to Justice Hall, and were giving a morning performance there. Tickets of admission to the court were sought after as though they had been passports to Paradise, and many a Peri—for so "interesting" a case attracted numbers of the softer sex—besieged that Eden gate—opening from the ghastly courtyard wherein the scaffold is housed—and went away disconsolate, since tears themselves could not avail them.

"The court 'olds five 'undred to 'ear, and eight 'undred to suffocate, and the eight 'undred is already there," was the grim rejoinder of the doorkeeper to all entreaties. "Why, no wonder," he added, "as 'ow this here place is called the pressyard," a professional *jeu d'esprit*, which earned for him in that appreciative neighbourhood, the reputation of a joker for life. Those persons, on the other hand, who would far rather have been anywhere else than in that Hall of Doom, were obliged to be present as witnesses. Mary herself, too, was there, breathless but firm, behind her thick crape veil, and sister Jane sat beside her, pale and trembling. Frederick Galton was pale enough, but he did not tremble, and when the indictment, with its terrible words, was read, he pleaded "Not guilty" in low but steady tones.

Mr. Creeps, Q.C. opened the case for the prosecution with his usual impressiveness. He stated that it was totally unnecessary for him to advert to the painful interest which the circumstances upon which he was about to dwell had excited in the public mind, to the

position which the accused had held in society, and to the place he had occupied, notwithstanding his extreme youth, in the literature of the day. It was an immense relief to him (the learned counsel), that at least it did not devolve upon him to lay to the charge of the prisoner at the bar the foul crime of Wilful Murder; the prosecution had decided that there were no grounds for pressing that accusation. It would have been a terrible thing, he owned, to have had to fix upon a fellow-creature, so young—so favoured by nature herself, to please the eye, the mind, and the heart—it would have been a dreadful mission, indeed, he repeated, to have had to press against such an individual, an accusation which, if proved, must have resulted in his execution in front of yonder prison. Yet, if he *had* been so instructed, that mission must have been fulfilled; and now, when he had still to urge a very weighty accusation against this unhappy youth—the crime of Manslaughter—he intended to discharge his duty, painful as it was; and he most solemnly warned the jury there impanelled in defence of the dearest

interests of Society, to do their duty too, and not to be swayed by sympathy or sentiment, which, however natural and even creditable to them in other situations, would, in their present position as jurymen, be at once pernicious and criminal.

It had never, alas! been his lot to conduct a case more conclusive than the one now confided to his charge. The chain of evidence was unbroken throughout, and led directly to the prisoner at the bar. Almost always, in similar cases, the testimony was of a more or less circumstantial kind, but in the present a witness would be brought forward, who, himself unseen, had actually beheld with his own eyes, the struggle which had resulted in the death of the deceased at the hands of the accused person. Under such circumstances, there was no need that any "motive" for commission of the crime should be established against the prisoner: he should therefore not enlarge upon the painful fact that the deceased and the accused had once been intimate, but had of late been upon the worst of terms with one another; and moreover, whether rightly or

wrongly, that the deceased entertained the gravest suspicions of the conduct of the prisoner with relation to his (the deceased's) wife. His learned friend, he perceived, was about to take exception to this statement; but when he added that Mrs. Meyrick herself, the widow of the deceased, would presently be called in corroboration—not, indeed, of the reasonableness of those suspicions, but of the fact of their existence—he concluded that his learned friend would consider silence to be his better course. Finally, he was not in a position to anticipate the defence that would be set up in the prisoner's behalf by his learned friend; but if that defence was (at it was whispered to be), that he was not responsible for his actions, then the jury must be well persuaded before admitting such an audacious—considering all the circumstances, he had almost said such a desperate plea, that the prisoner was labouring from such a defect of reason as not to know the nature of the act he was committing; or if he did know it, that he was not aware that he was doing wrong.

After stating the main facts of the case, of which

like everybody in the court we are ourselves aware, Mr. Creeps proceeded to call the identical witnesses who had given evidence before the coroner's jury. The only one of these to whom any questions were put in cross-examination, was the homeless beggar. He had been supplied with somewhat more decent garments than he wore upon his appearance before the coroner—for otherwise, it would have been necessary that all the Beauty and Fashion should have left the court—but his countenance was not at all less haggard, though his clothes were less ragged, nor his behaviour less like that of a hunted criminal. The judge, the police, the jury, the barristers, the attorneys, were to him only different species of a race whose hand had been ever against his own, and not seldom twisted in his neck-cloth, from the gutter which had been his cradle, until now. He glared upon them with mingled ferocity and wonder; he felt himself in a false position; with the dock he was familiar enough, but the witness-box was altogether a novelty to him. He seemed to think every question was directed to trip *him* up, to establish the

fact that it was high time that he should be marched off and put into prison uniform, and fed through a hole in a cell door, as usual. He had been out of jail for nearly six months.

If the intention of Mr. Griffiths had been to show that his client had not committed the deed laid to his charge, here was an admirable opportunity. Here was a witness whom it would have been the easiest work in the world to turn inside out; but that not being the learned counsel's object, he resisted the temptation, notwithstanding that his forensic mouth watered to do it, and only manipulated the poor fellow a little to see how he would mould. His observant eye had detected a change in the beggar's glance when, wandering from one part of the court to the other, like a frightened bird that seeks an outlet, it had fallen upon Frederick Galton. This man was then at all events favourable to his client's cause. "My good man," observed Mr. Griffiths, when the poor wretch had finished his evidence, "when you first saw from your resting-place behind the tree, the prisoner at the bar come across the

Park, did you observe anything peculiar in his manner?"

"My good man" dropped his eyes a moment, like one who is used to look for inspiration from beneath rather than from above, and responded curtly: "Well, yes I did, sir."

"Ah, you did, did you? Now please to tell the court how the prisoner looked—how he behaved himself."

"Well, he come very slow, and every now and then he stop, and mumbled at the nosegay as he 'eld in his 'and. Then he would take off his 'at, and the hair would blow back his 'air like the picture over the Hangel at 'Ampton; and he talked as though there was somebody by, the likes of which I never see before, unless when a cove's asleep. Then, when the other party come up all of a sudden and grabbed at his throat, I thought this party would have gone right off—he looked so scared."

"You mean that you thought he would have fainted."

"Ay, just so. I should think he jumped a foot or two in the hair. Then the other party loosed his 'old

to snatch at the flowers, and this ere chap he wouldn't give them up, and to it they went ;" here Mr. Griffiths indulged in a premonitory cough, and the witness did not conclude his sentence with, "'ammer and tongs," as he had intended.

"Very good ; we know all that, my good man ; but when the contest terminated, how did the prisoner behave then ? You have seen a good many 'rough and tumbles' in your life, my friend, I dare say ; now how did he behave—of course, he would be excited under such circumstances—but did he behave as a person who has gained the upper hand in such a conflict generally does behave ?"

"Certainly not, sir ; he behaved more like a fool in my judgment. Instead of sticking atop o' the other chap and keeping his 'ed well under water, he got away from him directly he felt hisself was loose, and ran away across the park, all wet and drippin', and his eyes half out of his 'ed, for all the world like a mad fellow.'

Re-examined by Mr. Creeps as to whether the mumbling at the nosegay "was not, in point of fact,

simply kissing it;" "my good man" replied that it was not.

The footman of the Deceased deposed to the fact that Mr. Frederick Galton left his master's house a little after daybreak upon the morning in question, with a bouquet in his possession.

He could not favour Mr. Creeps with the information as to whether it was his mistress's bouquet or not. He did not know as to the bouquet-holder. The prisoner was not carrying the bouquet in his hand, but in his pocket. As far as witness knew, it was customary to carry bouquets in the hand only.

Cross-examined by Mr. Griffiths.—The flowers were peeping out of the front-pocket of the prisoner's summer-coat. There was no attempt to conceal their presence there—certainly not. The prisoner was very much excited indeed; yes, extraordinarily so; quite out of himself, as one might say.

Re-examined by Mr. Creeps.—M. de Lernay, the father-in-law of deceased, had been seized with paralysis during supper, less than an hour before, and in

the presence of the prisoner. That was not sufficient in his (the witness's) opinion to produce extraordinary excitement.

"Call Eugenie Meyrick," said Mr. Creeps. At the mention of this name there was what the French call "agitation" in the court. Silken garments rustled everywhere as their wearers turned themselves towards the witness for a long and steady inspection of the deportment of their sister under her grievous trouble. All had heard of her ; many had seen her, the brightest ornament of a brilliant scene ; some had even taken her hand and smiled their thanks as they departed from her own roof after "a delightful evening." The Bar, who had their speculations as to what Creeps could make of her, ceased to make-believe to be studying their own briefs, and left off drawing caricatures of the "good man" self-appropriated by Mr. Griffiths, in order to concentrate their attention upon the fascinating and fashionable widow. Even the judge settled his gold spectacles upon the ridge of his nose with greater solicitude than usual, so that no

necessity for alteration in that important particular might presently withdraw his attention from the coming witness.

"May we ask you to raise your veil, madam," observed Mr. Creeps, assuming an expression of great blandness. To some hearts within the court he seemed to speak like a surgeon who requests that the patient should bare his limb as a preliminary to amputation; but to the majority his request afforded unmitigated satisfaction. It might, of course, have been desirable that the jury should see her features, but half the attraction of the show would have been lost did not the spectators see them too.

Eugenie had never looked so beautiful; and yet so woful, that the man must have had a hard heart who regarded her beauty rather than her woe.

"You are the widow of the deceased John Meyrick—are you not, madam?"

"I am." Her voice was low, but could be heard to the utmost extremity of the court as plainly as that of the crier.

"How long have you known the prisoner at the bar?"

"About two years."

"You knew him when he was at college, did you not?"

"I did."

"You met him occasionally at dinners, picnics, and the like; and he sometimes came to your own house, and spent a morning or an afternoon with you alone?"

"I met him several times at the table of Dr. Hermann, the principal of his college. I have been at water-parties in his company, perhaps, half-a-dozen times. He has passed several mornings, and, doubtless, several afternoons, at my father's invitation, in our house, and sometimes my father was not present."

"Upon your engagement with your late husband, the prisoner's visits, however, and, in fact, his intimacy with you altogether, were discontinued?"

"At the time of my engagement Mr. Galton left the university, and came to reside in London."

"Did he leave in consequence of your engagement?"

"Certainly not."

"Previous to your acquaintanceship with the prisoner, were the deceased and he on terms of intimate friendship?"

"They had, I believe, been playfellows together as boys. I do not think they were ever what could be called friends."

"Why not?"

"Their dispositions and pursuits were totally different."

"You think, perhaps, that there was too great an inequality of merit between them?"

"I do."

"And that the superiority did not lie upon the side of your husband?"

The witness did not reply.

"At all events, their intimacy, whether it was friendship or not, ceased altogether when you became engaged?"

"It had ceased before."

"But not before they had both known you?"

"I am not sure, but I think not."

"After your marriage, your husband often expressed himself in violent terms against the prisoner—in a word, whether with or without cause, he was jealous?"

"He was jealous without cause."

"Unknown to your husband you one day went to Somers Town, I believe?"

"I did."

"In order to see the prisoner?"

"No; I went to see his wife."

"Had you been previously a friend of Mrs. Galton's?"

"No."

"Had you ever seen her before in all your life?"

"No."

"Then what induced you to undertake an expedition which you could not but be aware would be displeasing to your husband, to visit a person with whom you had no previous acquaintance?"

"I decline to state."

Sensation in the court, during which Mr. Creeps consulted with his attorney.

"I shall not press the question, madam, although I have full power to do so—unless, indeed, by the answer, you must needs have criminated yourself. Well, although you did not go to Somers Town with the intention of seeing the prisoner at the bar, you *did* see him, did you not?"

"I did see him."

"He afterwards walked with you a portion of the way home, I think?"

"He did."

"Was your husband ever aware of this visit of yours?"

"I cannot say." The witness added with effort: "To the best of my belief he had made himself aware of it."

"You did not tell him yourself, however, at all events?"

"I never exchanged a word with him from the time of that occurrence until his death."

“What! you went to Somers Town on the 17th of June; your husband returns home that night, or the next morning”——

“He is brought home intoxicated,” observed the judge, referring to his notes.

“Very true, my lud—thank you, my lud—but is it possible, madam, that, although in his dressing-room, which adjoins your own apartment, the whole of that next day, you never even addressed one another?”

“We never *saw* one another at all.”

“He was then so transported with rage and jealousy—doubtless exaggerated by drink—that he would not even speak to you; nor would he take part in the festivities which were being held in his own house upon the evening in question?”

Eugenie made no reply.

“Is it not true, madam, that his feelings had been so excited as even to cause him—during the very period in which these festivities were occurring—to attempt, or at least to make preparations for attempting, self-destruction?”

"No."

"But we have it in evidence. Your own maid has deposed to the fact, that a silken-rope, with a slip-knot in it—a bell-rope from your own room, I think it was—was found coiled under his pillow, upon the very bed where he had been lying so long. Do you mean to tell me that he had not intended to use that rope for the purpose of suicide?"

"Yes."

"Why, what else could he have proposed to do with it?"

She had sworn to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. If she did so, her reply would be: "I believe that my husband intended, with that rope, to strangle not himself, but me." Yet, what good could such a declaration effect for anybody? and what incalculable pain—if it was believed at all—would it produce in the rude but honest old squire at Casterton, and in that childless mother, for whom John Meyrick himself had kept one sound spot to the last in his corrupted heart? Perhaps, too, respect

for that great city of refuge, Death, to which the poor wretch had fled, bade her spare his memory.

"I incline to the belief," said she, "that my late husband rather wished people to imagine that he intended to commit suicide, than seriously contemplated such an act in his own mind."

This was true—for John Meyrick would have been about the last man in the world to hang himself voluntarily—but it was not the whole truth.

The audience, which had been upon the tiptoe of expectation for some horrible surmise, settled down again, relieved, but disappointed. Mr. Creeps himself, too, looked a little balked.

"I will not prolong an ordeal," said he, "which cannot but be very painful to you, madam, much further; but with respect to this bouquet—you presented it, I believe, to the prisoner at the bar with your own hand?"

"I did, sir."

"You were upon the point of going abroad, madam—were you not—when you received the summons to attend this court as a witness?"

"I was, sir."

Mr. Creeps, with one intelligent glance at the jury, resumed his seat.

Mr. Griffiths rose.

"What was the cause of your being about to leave this country, Mrs. Meyrick?"

"My father's dangerous illness. He was advised to start for the south of France immediately, and he could not do so without me."

"And with respect to this bouquet, of which so much has been made, are we to understand, as my learned friend has left it to be understood, that you presented it to the prisoner at the bar as a gift from you to him?"

"I gave it to him in order that he might take it home, and present it to his wife from me."

Re-examined by Mr. Creeps.—"Supposing that such was your intention, madam—that you intended to send these flowers to a lady whom you had only seen once in your life, by the hand of her husband, with whom you were on terms of intimacy—do you not

think it possible that the prisoner at the bar might have flattered himself that the bouquet was, in fact, for *him*?"

"No, sir; or if he did"—She paused.

"Well, madam—well," repeated Mr. Creeps, like one upon the very verge of a great discovery.

"If he did," replied Eugenie, calmly, "he must have been Mad indeed."

CHAPTER XVI.


FOR THE DEFENCE.

THE case for the prosecution being closed, Mr. Griffiths rose and said : " It does not lie in my power, gentlemen of the jury, to rebut the evidence brought forward against my unhappy client, so far, at least, as it relates to the personal encounter between him and the deceased, and it does not lie in my intention. That he is amenable to the present charge does not admit of any argument, nor is it difficult to guess, with almost minute exactness, how the unhappy deed was wrought. My learned friend has very properly told you that it is impossible to lay the charge of Wilful Murder against the accused. He might have added, that it would be equally impossible to convict him of anything graver than that of Justifiable Homicide,

which, as you are well aware, is no offence at all. The conflict, which resulted so fatally for himself, was evidently thrust by the Deceased—maddened with groundless jealousy, and hate, and drink—upon the prisoner at the bar. I say jealousy, because my learned friend has chosen to bring this painful feature of the case before your notice with the object of prejudicing my unhappy client. My client is as innocent of that social crime which has been hinted at, as of the more serious charge which the prosecution has been compelled to abandon. I deny that any ground of jealousy existed, once for all. I might have disproved it, had it been necessary ; and if I had thought that the virtuous and admirable demeanour of the last witness could have been lost upon so intelligent a jury, I would have done so ; but I did not do so, because, in my cross-examination of Mrs. Meyrick, I must have elicited many distressing facts concerning her late husband. I did not do so, I repeat, only because I wished, as far as possible, to spare the memory of the dead.

“ Why, then, it will be asked, did not the prisoner at the bar, having been thus groundlessly attacked, and having, in self-defence, been compelled to slay his adversary, being conscious of the commission, I do not say, of no crime, but even of no misdemeanour—why, it will be asked, did not the prisoner at the bar at once repair to the nearest police-station—situated in the very direction, too, which it has been proved he did take after the commission of the presumed offence—and describe the occurrence, with all those circumstances, which we have heard from an eye-witness did actually take place—why did he not do this? I will tell you, gentlemen of the jury; it was because he was Mad—because he was unaware of what he did, or what he omitted to do. If he was sane, what would happen to him even now—to-day? At the worst, a few months’, or, more likely, a few days’, imprisonment; at the best, and most probably, acquittal as having committed a Justifiable Homicide. Can you suppose, then, that I should be instructed to defend him from so trifling a peril on such a ground as Insanity, which, if allowed,

might consign him to a life-long imprisonment, unless my unhappy client were really and truly Insane—unaccountable for his actions. Would not the defence proposed be worse in its consequences than the worst punishment which it was designed to elude? Surely the consideration of this fact might alone convince you that the plea which I have to urge must needs be genuine. I shall bring forward, however, other evidence—the direct testimony of personal friends and relatives, which, of itself, will be amply sufficient to establish that the prisoner at the bar has been long deprived of his reason to such an extent, as to render him not answerable to the laws. I shall also bring forward medical evidence of the most unimpeachable kind. Finally, I shall prove the existence of insanity in the prisoner's family. Any one of these arguments would, I conceive, be sufficient to convince you that my unfortunate client is legally irresponsible for the deed laid to his charge; but their cumulative testimony is such, that I cannot imagine a mind so obstinate or so obtuse as to be capable of resisting it.



“It will doubtless be urged by my learned friend, that the eminence which the accused has earned for himself at such an early age in periodical literature, militates strongly against the plea which I have been instructed to urge on his behalf; but I need not tell *you* that persons of genius, and especially of literary genius, are most liable to the dread infliction of madness, and, indeed, are seldom capable of taking care of themselves or their own affairs. Nay, it will be seen, that at an early age this very literary faculty of the accused was manifested in a manner which, while it evidenced some talent, gave still stronger indications of a diseased and morbid brain. I beg to call the jury’s earnest heed—although I fear the most rapt attention will be thrown away in so far as detecting any meaning in the lines is concerned—to these verses in the prisoner’s own handwriting, composed about the age of seventeen, and believed by him even now (poor fellow!) to be pregnant with intelligence and suggestiveness. They are headed ‘*A Frequent Thought*,’ so that it was obvious that the condition of mind was recurrent—

habitual, in fact—in which such Midsummer Madness had been penned :

*' When the doors have closed behind us, and the voices died away,
Do the singers cease their singing, and the children end their play ?
Do the words of wisdom well no more through the calm lips of age ?
Are the fountains dried whence the young draw hopes too deep for the
faith of the sage ?*

*And, like the flower that closes up when the East begins to glow,
Doth the maiden's beauty fade from off her tender cheek and brow ?
Are they all but subtle spirits changing into those and these,
To vex us with a feigned sorrow, or to mock us while they please ?
All this world a scene phantasmal, shifting aye to something strange,
Such as, if but disenchanted, one might mark in act to change.
See the unembodied beings that we hold of our own kind,
Friend and Foe, and Kin and Lover, each a help to make us blind,
Set to watch our lonely hours, ambushing about our path,
That our eyes may never open till their lids are closed in Death ;
And when so closed, will these things be as though we had ne'er been,
born,*

*And e'en without those tears which are dried swift as the dews by the
Morn,*

*That makes us feel these Fancies more, so strange doth it appear,
How the memory of a dead man dies with those he held most dear,
As though there was an end, with Life, of the mockery that beguiles
Our every act, tricks out our woes, and cheats us of our smiles,
And makes to love, and scorn, and hate, and parts and reconciles.'*

“ Gentlemen of the jury, we have caused twelve copies,

of this most extraordinary production to be printed, which will be placed in your hands, lest you may imagine that any latent meaning in the verses may have escaped you through my delivery of them. What would have been your state of mind, I ask, upon finding that any son of your own—of whom, too, you had entertained high hopes—had composed such a piece of writing? Fine pieces of poetry have before now been composed by poets absolutely insane, and even in confinement, but when has there been such a piece of poetry as this, composed by a sane mind? I have said that no meaning whatever can be found in it; but I correct myself thus far, and own that there is this much to be gathered from it—the incontestable fact of the insanity of the writer. I will put aside the inexplicable allusions to the Singers and the Children, the Fountains and the Flower, and even the totally unexpected reference to the Maiden (Good Heavens! *what* maiden?) and confine myself to the mention of the “subtle Spirits,” changing into “those and these” (these what?), and mocking him—the prisoner at the

bar. Why, was not this notion of being haunted by spirits one of the most common forms of mental delusion? As for this world being nothing but a 'scene phantasmal'——the time, gentlemen of the jury, has arrived when it is customary for the court to take some slight refreshment, and I will not detain you any longer over a subject upon which you are as capable of exercising as sound a judgment as myself. The question, could a sane man write such verses? is not one which requires any technical knowledge of any sort to answer it, but demands a reply in the negative from every person endowed with common sense.

CHAPTER XVII.

WHAT ONE'S FRIENDS REALLY THINK OF ONE.

AFTER an adjournment of half an hour, the court resumed its sittings, and the following witnesses were called by Mr. Griffiths.

The Rev. Robert Morrit deposed.—The prisoner at the bar is my sister's son. I have had a very intimate acquaintance with him up to within the last two years. He was singular in his habits and behaviour; something more than merely eccentric. He was exceedingly clever, but remarkably deficient in judgment. His nature was singularly gentle, kind, and humane: but he was subject to fits of passion. Nothing could control these ebullitions; even when he was quite a child. Although a tolerable scholar, and an insatiable reader of books of a certain sort, he took great pleasure, even

up to the age of seventeen, in trolling a hoop. He would sometimes amuse himself in that manner for an entire day. The books that he studied for his own pleasure were of an imaginative kind—poetry, romances, and the like. He wrote a great deal of poetry, and much of it was similar to that entitled “The Frequent Thought,” read in court (as he understood), that day. He (witness) was well acquainted with English poetry, and he had never read anything at all like his nephew’s poetry in any other author. It was not the poetry of a sane man. A relative of the prisoner, one Mr. Thomas Morrit, had gone out of his mind. He was the prisoner’s cousin. He was under confinement at the present moment in a lunatic asylum. He (witness) had not been intimate with the prisoner at the bar within the last two years. The intimacy had been intermitted through the unreasonable conduct of the prisoner, and upon no other account. Having been intrusted by the late Dr. Galton with the control of his son’s money-affairs, he had not thought himself justified in allowing him such an income as he would have allowed

him had he behaved in a less eccentric manner. The conduct of the prisoner at the bar had been unreasonable in many respects. He had declined to belong to his father's profession, though greatly urged to do so, and though the circumstances, in case he did, were particularly favourable. He would not attach himself to any profession. He had married beneath him.

Cross-examined by Mr. Creeps.—By the expression Married Beneath Him, he did not mean that he had merely made an ineligible match; it was a match that no man, however young and inexperienced, but being sane, could have been expected to have made. He (witness) had often expressed, before the unhappy circumstances which gave rise to the present trial had occurred, that the prisoner at the bar was mad. He had stated it in so many words. He had also heard others do so.

The next witness was much affected while giving her evidence, and had to be accommodated with a chair.

Ann Hartopp deposed.—Had known Master Freddy

—the prisoner at the bar, if she must call him that—ever since he was born. He was always a most lovable child ; everybody loved him as came near him. He would never have hurt a fly, even in his worst tantrums ; she meant by “tantrums,” ungovernable fits of passion ; often and often she had lain him down upon the carpet, with a pillow under his darling head, and let him wear hisself out with tantrums ; that was, of course, when he was a very little boy. He was always what would be called queer ; very queer indeed. He would run about the house pretending he was a steam-engine, and telling people to shunt themselves out of the way. He used to write a great deal of poetry to her (witness) at one time, and it always made her cry. She did not know that it was pathetic. She had never understood a word of it, and had shown it to lots of people as didn’t understand it neither.

Cross-examined by Mr. Creeps.—His running about the house like a steam-engine occurred when he was more than a little boy. Yes, a good deal more. It occurred within a year or so of his being married.

Dr. Hermann, President of Minim Hall, deposed.—The prisoner at the bar resided at Minim Hall as an undergraduate for two terms. He (witness) had had many opportunities of observing his character. It was truly excellent in all respects. His intelligence was very acute, but there were striking flaws in it. He (witness) did not know whether the prisoner at the bar went by the nickname of Mad Galton among his fellow-students or not; he could not be expected to be cognisant of any fact of that nature; but in his own judgment, the young gentleman had certainly merited such an appellation. His manner, when not unnecessarily pronounced and sprightly, was abstracted.

Cross-examined by Mr. Creeps.—He had known great scholars, who were almost as eccentric as the prisoner at the bar, but Mr. Galton was not a great scholar. He did not know that what was but eccentricity in a great scholar would seem, in an undergraduate, to be insanity.

Sir Geoffrey Ackers examined.—Was intimate with the prisoner at the bar during all his college career.

It was a very short one, but long enough to have made itself remembered. It was memorable by reason of its eccentricity. His opinions were very peculiar, and such as (in the witness's judgment) could scarcely have been entertained by a sane person in the rank of life of the prisoner at the bar. His political expectations, as expressed in his speeches at the University Debating Society, were the dreams of a madman; they were not merely what is called visionary. He always went by the name of Mad Galton among his friends. He had on one occasion called at witness's house in London, and lunched with him, and although the girl with whom he was engaged was under the same roof, he had neither spoken of her nor made any effort to see her. He had no hesitation in saying that the prisoner at the bar was, in his (witness's) judgment, of unsound mind.

Cross-examined by Mr. Creeps.—The girl to whom the prisoner at the bar had been engaged, was of humble rank. She was not of a rank to sit down to luncheon in the dining-room on the occasion in ques-

tion—her place was in the housekeeper's room. The prisoner at the bar had distinctly inquired for her of the footman who opened the front door ; he could not possibly have forgotten that circumstance, for he had repeated that inquiry. Until he (witness) had been in possession of that fact, he had thought the prisoner's reticence at luncheon had arisen from a wish to conceal his engagement ; he was now convinced that it was due to lunacy.

Mr. Percival Potts examined.—Had known the prisoner at the bar both before and after his marriage ; ever since, in fact, he had left the university. Had always thought him more than eccentric. Believed him to be the victim of delusions. Especially remembered one instance of delusion which came under his notice on the first occasion of his acquaintance with the accused. They met in Hyde Park, late at night, not far from the very spot where the unhappy struggle, which produced the present inquiry, had taken place—and the prisoner at the bar had besought his assistance against certain robbers or murderers, by whom he

imagined he had been attacked. There were no robbers or murderers. In the imagination of the prisoner there was also a little child who had done her best to save him from these brigands, and for whom he felt an extravagant gratitude ; he left at his lodgings the most elaborate directions respecting the manner in which she should be received in his absence, and expected her, day after day, for a considerable time. No such little child ever called at the prisoner's address, or was likely to call.

Other witnesses, including Mrs. Gideon, and Mr. Jacob Lunes (who gave his own ideas of the quotation from King Lear which he had overheard from under the shepherd's hurdle), were then examined, and gave corroboratory but less-important evidence.

Dr. Beebonnet deposed.—I have seen the prisoner several times during his confinement in Newgate, and conversed with him upon various matters, but especially upon the subject of his presumed offence. His behaviour was certainly not feigned. I consider him to be decidedly an insane person. He informed me that

he did not consider that he had committed any crime in taking the life of Mr. John Meyrick. He was not referring to the circumstance of his having killed him in self-defence. He spoke with great calmness and deliberation. At times, when he could not have been aware that he was under observation, he became much excited, and would conduct himself almost like one in frenzy. His opinions upon all subjects were most extraordinary and abnormal. His ideas upon political matters in particular, he (witness) should designate—if the accused had been a sane man—as those of an incendiary. If his present state of derangement existed upon the 18th of June last it would be likely to lead to the commission of manslaughter. He should describe such a crime, if speaking professionally, as being the consequence of a “homicidal climax.” It would be quite possible for an individual so far lunatic, to take precautions against the discovery of such an offence: even a precaution which presumed so much sagacity as that of putting a clock back, with the intention of procuring an alibi.

Here Mr. Griffiths blandly observed : "That will do, Dr. Beebonnet ;" but Mr. Creeps bounded up like an india-rubber ball, and requested the learned doctor to stay where he was, and answer *him* a question or two.

The great expert put down his hat again—having indeed cherished but small hope of getting away so easily—and regarded his natural enemy with affable contempt.

"You have told us," commenced Mr. Creeps, "that the prisoner at the bar conversed with you upon the subject of this tragical crime, with calmness and deliberation. Are we to understand, Dr. Beebonnet, that you consider such behaviour to be any proof of his having a diseased intellect?"

"I consider such behaviour to be a strong, though not a convincing, sign of insanity."

"Very good, sir ; and when you detected him un-awares conducting himself with almost frenzy—that is to say, acting in a diametrically opposite manner, did you take *that* to be a strong sign of his insanity?"

"I took that to be a convincing sign," responded the doctor calmly.

"I think, doctor," observed Mr. Creeps smiling, "that it would be extremely difficult for any one of us to persuade you by any course of conduct that we could possibly adopt under your official investigation, that *we* were sane. Perhaps, however, you will kindly inform us what you mean by a homicidal climax?"

"I believe," observed Dr. Beebonnet with deliberation, "that the prisoner at the bar has been labouring under homicidal mania for a considerable time—it may be ever since the period of life at which that disease is generally induced—and that an uncontrollable homicidal impulse took possession of him upon the fatal occasion in question."

"That is to say," observed Mr. Creeps, "exactly at the moment when he happened to be uppermost in the struggle between himself and his victim, and held his life in his hands."

"Precisely so," returned Dr. Beebonnet.

"You have told us that the act of putting a clock back after the commission of a crime, as evidenced in the present case by the prisoner's landlady, in order to

evade suspicion, or to ground an alibi, is by no means inconsistent with a mind incapable of logical conclusion. Now if the prisoner at the bar had *not* put the clock back—if he had taken no means whatever to conceal his offence, would you not consider such neglect to be a strong evidence of his being insane?”

“It would be a strong, but not a convincing, proof of insanity,” replied the unabashed expert.

“In point of fact,” observed Mr. Creeps severely, “just as a dilettante in a picture-gallery will have it that he alone understands what is beautiful, and that the eyes which nature has given other people can see nothing rightly unless they borrow his spectacles, so do you learned doctors assume to yourselves the monopoly of deciding on the sanity or otherwise of this or that individual, although to the rest of his fellow-creatures he may always have shown himself as wise and capable, at least, as you yourselves.”

“I thank you, sir,” returned the doctor urbanely, “for having stated our case so fairly. Having given up our lives, like the connoisseurs of the fine arts of whom

you speak, to one particular pursuit, we do assume to know something more about it than the great mass of mankind; and [here he began to italicise] especially than those persons whose self-interest, often in antagonism to their judgment, alone induces them to form any opinion upon the subject whatever."

Dr. Crotchet examined and deposed.—Had had interviews with the prisoner at the bar in conjunction with the last witness, but had formed his own opinion. His idea had certainly at first been that the accused was feigning madness, or at least was more than willing to be considered as of unsound mind. He (witness) had now abandoned that theory; he flattered himself it was not easy to make him abandon any theory except upon strong grounds. Those grounds had, in his judgment, been given, on the result of a certain ordeal which the prisoner had unconsciously undergone, with the view of testing the genuineness of his malady. He (witness) had no longer any doubt respecting the insanity of the prisoner.

Cross-examined by Mr. Creeps.—There was a most

important difference between insanity and unsoundness of mind ; it would take much time to explain the distinction, but there were seven volumes extant upon that subject, written by witness himself, which might be said to have exhausted it. He did not say that Mr. Creeps could not do better than purchase them, but he might unquestionably do a great deal worse. He would not say if Mr. Creeps declined to purchase them, that it would be a convincing proof of his unsoundness of mind ; he would decline to swear that it was not a strong proof. He did not always agree with Dr. Beebonnet upon these species of cases ; he did not agree with him upon the present case. He thought the theory of homicidal climax was a sheer absurdity. He believed that the prisoner had committed the crime imputed to him in a fit of insanity ; but it was not through a homicidal climax. It was through a sudden "Suspension of the Will." He (witness) would be very happy to deliver his views upon the suspension of the will, but he warned the court that the subject was an abstruse one.

Mr. Creeps declined to trouble him, observing facetiously, that if the theory of Suspension of the Will was to be accepted in all cases of capital crime, the theory of Suspension of the Body might as well disappear from our penal enactments.

After sitting down for a moment or two, to permit his countenance to lose the elation consequent upon this *jeu d'esprit*, Mr. Creeps arose, and replied upon the part of the prosecution. He went through all the evidence for the defence, with abundant comments upon its weakness and futility; contending that the testimony of the prisoner's personal friends had been coloured by a natural wish to preserve him from the shameful position of a felon, and intimating that their very plea of insanity—the original idea, perhaps, of some sagacious attorney—had suggested to them, for the first time in their lives, that Mr. Frederick Galton was not as sane as any one of them. He reviewed the medical evidence with especial severity; and with respect to "The Frequent Thought," he begged to observe, that he held in his hand a copy of a published

work of the prisoner at the bar, which contained, besides poems of great beauty, others quite as ridiculous and unmeaning, as the verses in question. It was not unusual for a poetical writer to write obscurely. His learned friend had laid a great stress upon this matter, taking it for granted, perhaps, that all the gentlemen of the jury were not entirely conversant with modern works of the imagination, but he would beg to read them some extracts from a very famous poem, called "Sordello," and from another, entitled "Balder," which he did not hesitate to say would be found quite as inexplicable——

Here the learned judge interposed with some alacrity, observing that such a course could not be adopted ; inasmuch as the case before the court could not be affected by the sanity or insanity of the authors in question.

Whereupon Mr. Creeps wound up his observations with an appeal to the native intelligence of those twelve gentlemen whom it had been his great privilege to address upon the present important occasion, more

especially directing their attention to the standard of plain Common Sense which they were there to uphold, and to the Well-being of Society, of which they had been appointed the body-guard. The judge then addressed the same unhappy persons, and summed up the whole case—unfavourably (as the Bar considered) for the prisoner's plea.

The twelve retired to consider their verdict, and remained for hours in their mysterious seclusion. Other cases were brought on before another twelve, in the conduct of which Mr. Creeps exhibited the same virtuous indignation, when employed for the prosecution as before; but when engaged for the defence, a tender sympathy with menaced Innocence. The judge, too, performed his duties as though they were as important as that which he had already executed. But the audience at large waited impatiently to learn the event of the first trial. Lights were brought into the dingy court-house; but still they waited, with their looks nailed to the door whereby the men must enter for whose grave decision they had so long tarried. The

witnesses for the defence remained in a room apart, and with them Mrs. Galton and her sister. Mr. Griffiths, who was vastly interested in the case, came in and out every quarter of an hour, though he had no news. He declined to give any opinion upon what the verdict would be, but it was evident that he feared the effect of the judge's charge. At last he came in, rubbing his hands, which only occurred with him at a certain considerable height in his spirit-level. The jury had sent out for a copy of "The Frequent Thought," which by some accident had not been supplied to them; there was a certain carcass-butcher among them, whom Mr. Griffiths felt confident of, if he did but read that poem for himself. In ten minutes from that time the usher came to call them. The jury had returned to court, and were about to deliver their verdict. The carcass-butcher looked radiant and very red. He had been opposed by somebody with considerable obstinacy, but now, at least, he was triumphant.

"We find Frederick Galton Not Guilty, my lord,"

said the foreman, in answer to the usual question, "upon the ground of insanity."

"Those verses did the trick," observed Mr. Griffiths confidentially to his friend Mr. Clene Hans.

The muscles of the attorney's right eye quivered for a moment, but he made no audible reply.

"Heaven be praised!" exclaimed the curate devoutly.

"All that now remains must be left to Pup—pup—pup——" remarked Mr. Jonathan Johnson, who had watched the whole proceedings with intense interest.

"Yes, to Providence; we can do no more, I suppose," sighed the curate.

"Must be left to Pup—pup—pup—Potts," continued Mr. Johnson, as though nobody had made any intervening observation. "He is well in with the ministry, and has asked for nothing for this six weeks on pup—pup—purpose to make himself heard by the Home Secretary."

"During her Majesty's pleasure," murmured Mary, repeating the last words of the judge, like a child who,

having mastered its first lesson, begins to commit its second to memory. "Can I see him to-day, Uncle Robert?"

Mr. Morrit, who had not the heart to say "No," looked hesitatingly towards Mr. Griffiths.

"My dear madam," said the barrister with feeling, "I think it would be better to make no such application just now. I make no doubt that constant opportunities of interview will soon be afforded to you ; and I entertain a firm hope that at no great distance of time your husband will be restored to you by the Crown."

CHAPTER XVIII.

REST AND BE THANKFUL.

MR. GRIFFITHS was not a man to hold out false hopes ; and his prophecy was not long in fulfilment. His opinion respecting the advantage of social position was not perhaps so decided as that of Mr. Sydney Smith, who has informed us that the British law is open to rich and poor alike—*like the London Tavern* ; but he was well aware that station had its privileges in matters of this particular nature. Nor is this fact so unjust as it appears to be. That the superior classes suffer under accusation fiftyfold more than those who are content to call them their “betters,” is only right and proper ; the chances are that they deserve it fiftyfold, and therefore their punishment should be in nowise decreased. But what would be the use of giving up a pauper criminal

lunatic to his friends, even if they were ever so desirous to have him—of which there is no recorded instance? Upon the other hand, what could her Gracious Majesty do better than intrust Frederick Galton to the custody of his wife and other relatives, about to reside with him in a secluded valley of Switzerland, removed from what Dr. Crotchet terms (in his admirable treatise upon “Suspension of the Will”) all “exciting causes,” and far from those familiar scenes which were so likely, “through association with the past, to superinduce [in the very words of Dr. Beebonnet] a homicidal climax.” Still, there was some necessity for patience. The *Daily Democrat* had concluded its fiery leader upon the gross miscarriage of justice during the late trial, with a warning to the Home Secretary that its vigilant eye was fixed upon him, and would watch his future conduct in this case with a jealous but unhappily only too well-founded suspicion. Many weary months dragged their slow length along before Frederick Galton was once more a free man, and even then under conditions.

The *Daily Democrat* need not have been so indignant,

for his punishment had been at least as severe as he deserved. I do not say as his crime deserved, for he had absolutely committed none whatever. Providence sometimes uses mortal statute-books for the chastisement of offences against which mortals have enacted no law; but there is no miscarriage of justice in the courts of Heaven. Nobody is more aware of this fact than the culprit himself, notwithstanding that to others he may seem a victim! To many, and especially to those who knew him best, Frederick Galton did appear, even when he had obtained his much-grudged liberty, a hardly-used and very ill-starred man. Not a few of them regretted that the plea upon which he had escaped the slur of crime had been used at all. He might very probably have escaped without that plea, which, whether genuine or assumed, must equally be his ruin. How bitter, it seemed, that one so young, and yet who had given such high promise of honourable fame, should have thus wrecked himself! Even a premature death would have been preferable to this—as absolute an extinction of his career, but one which did not leave his

reputation unsullied. Frederick himself was fortunately not of this opinion. True, he was young, but he had already had enough of a number of things, of which a continuance of the life he had hitherto led could only give him more. It did not wound him in the least to think that he should never play the part of a London *succès* again. He had recently had an opportunity of estimating pretty accurately how little that sort of popularity was worth; and also of discovering how beyond all price is the affection of a few true hearts. How could he ever have fathomed the love of Mary, his wife, save by this far-reaching plummet of adversity; and what rarest proofs of devotion had it brought up—as that which clings to the lead shows the nature of the anchorage—from the clear depths of her soul.

No smile had flickered on her lips—nay, not a tear (although she had prayed for tears) had bedewed her eyes, from the hour that he was put in hold, to that in which she clasped him imprisoned in her loving arms, but a free man once more. Then she smiled, then she wept, as one who has reaped reward far greater than

her meed. And yet she had toiled, too: toiled, nay, she had slept only that she might toil for him the more.

In the beautiful valley of the Vorder Rhine, and not very far from that spot, short of Disentis, where the indifferent char-road ceases altogether, there has arisen a small but comfortable English mansion. Thither (at the time I write of) few travellers had begun to penetrate, and the inns in the neighbouring villages were described even in the mellifluous Murray as "rough" or "of ill repute;" while even now the place is one of the most secluded in Switzerland. Still, not only when the laughing Rhine leaps down from the sunny pastures of the Oberalp, to seek the clustering cherry-trees of Somvix, or the shadow of the woods of Trâns, but when it rages, swollen by the snows of winter, that English home has not only its wonted tenants, but even its visitors. Its tenants are not a few. Besides the master of the house, and his still lovely wife, and their boy, about whose educational future domestic councils have already begun to be held, there are Mrs. Perling and

her daughter Jane. Never did man and his mother-in-law dwell so peaceably together as do Frederick and the widow; she would as soon think of interfering in the affairs of his household, as of dictating the policy of the Swiss Confederation; while it is impossible that she can ever vex him in that happy valley by travelling in a third-class carriage, even though a railway should be projected in the locality by a board of Directors sitting at Colney Hatch. Whatever she does is right in the eyes of the neighbours, and it is even said—her daughter, Mrs. Galton, being held to be a sort of Princess, whose attire it would be idle to emulate—that Mrs. Perling sets the fashions to the majority of the Romansch (female) population. She has never acquired their dialect, nor is it probable that she ever will do so, but she speaks (and acts) the common language of charity and benevolence, and everybody understands her very well. She does not regret Oldborough, for it was only because it held her dear ones that she loved it, and now they are both with her under the same roof. The homely life, the quiet scenes, are very pleasing to

•

her ; and the only alloy of her happy life is avalanches. These alarming occurrences she considers preventable, and no such things, she is firmly convinced, would ever have been permitted in England—no matter in what geological era.

Sister Jane imagines herself to be in an earthly Paradise. All her dreams of natural beauty are realized in Stream and Forest, in Upland and Ravine. She lives out of doors, whenever, that is, her presence is not needed within them, for her chiefest pleasure is still, as always, to make herself useful to other people. Next to his mother, Master Frederick Galton—the *second* ! Ah me ! the years, the years they glide away !—next to his mother, I say, the boy loves Aunt Jenny, although he is dearly fond of papa, too. Fond, too, he is of Uncle Robert, although that gentleman often leads him to the fountains of Greek literature, when he would much rather seek the Rhine stream with his fishing-rod ; nay more, although he urgently recommends that, when the proper time arrives, the youth shall be sent to one of the English universities—if not to Camford,

then (at least) to Oxbridge. It was impossible that the Curate should reside any longer at Casterton—not a stone's throw from the Grange. He visits England occasionally, but his home is with his nephew and niece. It is very pleasant to see him strolling slowly with her up the gorge towards the Oberalp on any summer afternoon; he insists upon it, every hundred yards or so, that they have now arrived at one of the points where the view is to be admired, and pauses to survey it at leisure. The fact is, he is out of breath, for reasons. He says that the Romansch bread is very nasty (in which opinion I agree with him), and finds the staff of life in boxes of biscuits from Messrs. Huntley and Palmer; but the fact is, the curate is 'banting.' It is impossible to mistake that well-preserved, comfortable-looking British divine for one of those ecclesiastics in the Disentis Monastery, with whom, however, he is on the best of terms. He has not much in common with them, and especially (he thanks Heaven) not his meals; but he has got to understand their barbarous Latin at last, which Dr. Hermann, travelling (*en garçon*)

last year in that locality, was quite unable to do. Mr. Morrit has no twenty-port left to give them, but they immensely appreciate Minim Hall audit ale. They believe Mrs. Galton to be altogether too good and beautiful to be suffered to die a heretic ; but although she has once or twice attended their somewhat tawdry little valley churches, she has only been heard to express herself with enthusiasm in favour of their monastery-bell, the tone of which is certainly admirable.

Every year she makes a pilgrimage to another religious house, at Florac, in Lozere, and stays a week with Eugenie de Lernay, who has resumed her maiden name. No male has been ever admitted among the sisterhood save once, when Master Frederick accompanied his mother by special invitation, and was received with rapture ; stay ; I am wrong ; another exception was made long ago for Eugenie's sake. M. de Lernay was laid by the side of his dead daughter and the faithful Kathleen, in the God's acre of the convent. There she hopes to be laid herself in God's good time, but not earlier. The widow of John Meyrick

must needs be happy by comparison with his wife, but Eugenie is happy in the positive degree. The scenes about her remind her of the dead whom she has loved most in this world ; and of those who are yet alive and dear to her she hears good tidings brought by a faithful messenger. She rarely weeps, unless when Mary departs after her periodical visit. Then her heart follows her upon the road, and she pictures her return to husband, and child, and home ; and perhaps the involuntary painter sheds a bitter tear or two, because such things have been denied to herself. Still, although we cannot honestly end our story, like some more fortunate chroniclers, with the assurance, that all our favourites "lived very happy afterwards," yet they have little to complain of, while the remembrance of what they have endured and escaped from makes their contentment the greater.

Casual tourists who enjoy Frederick Galton's hospitality in the summer-time, express their wonder that such a radiant talker and keen thinker can consent to dwell in the wilderness ; but their remark is at least

an evidence that he has not lost his high spirits. His lot is surely as enviable as that of the most popular "diner-out," who, at the end of his butterfly existence, publishes his "Reminiscences of Men and Things." He roams over the Rhœtian Alps with a step almost as buoyant as that with which he used to tread the breezy Downs at home long, long ago—the Downs that retain no vestige of him nor his, save a little white cross, with W. G. upon it, on the spot where his father's uneventful days were hurried to their close, and a simple grave in Casterton churchyard, kept green and flowering by hands that stretch across the sea. I can myself witness to his being a genial host and a mighty climber of the mountain-tops ; neither will it be a breach of confidence to say that the *Porcupine* has by no means lost its most brilliant contributor. It was in company with the editor-in-chief of that periodical, and of his friend Mr. Percival Potts—very frequent visitors to the valley of the Vorder Rhine at all seasons—that I last saw Frederick Galton. We had been his guests, and he and his wife accompanied us far upon our way as we climbed

the gorge that leads to Andermatt. They did not part from us till we had reached the high pasture-lands, and, for my part, I felt very sad to have to say good-bye. Never had I met a host so agreeable, nor a hostess altogether so charming. How I envied them, as they turned and took their way back to their happy valley, arm linked in arm! As for us, we were bound for London and the great world, where no such sights are to be seen.

"I tell you what, Pup—pup—pup—Potts," observed Mr. Jonathan Johnson, looking after them, and returning the last flutter of Mrs. Galton's handkerchief with his own.

"Well, what?" returned Potts, who was waving his hat, in melancholy reply to the white signal.

"I tell you what, Pup—pup—pup—Potts, depend upon it that, after all, our friend Galton never mur—mur—mur"—

"Never murdered anybody!" interrupted Potts testily—"of course, he didn't."

"Depend upon it," repeated Mr. Jonathan Johnson

persistently, "that our friend Galton never mur—mur
——'Married beneath Him,' after all."

"Married beneath him!" echoed Potts indignantly ;

"'REGIUM CERTE GENUS'—

"That woman's a princess, if ever there was one."

THE END.

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